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Subaltern Writing and Popular Memory in the Early Modern World

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Antonio Castillo Gómez and Miguel Martínez

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‘Thanks ... All the rest is mute’
(*All's Well That Ends Well*, 2.3.83)



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Editorial Memory from Below*

Miguel Martínez

University of Chicago (<martinezm@uchicago.edu>)

Antonio Castillo Gómez

University Alcalá (<antonio.castillo@uah.es>)

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Abstract

The editorial provides an overview of this issue of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies*. First it lays out the research questions that were at the origin of the project. Then it sketches out its conceptual and historiographical armature, pointing to some classical and recent arguments about memory, the history of literacy, and popular writing. Finally, this essay surveys the structure of the special issue and summarizes the object and argument of each one of the fifteen contributions.

Keywords: Early Modern Period, Literacy, Memory, Subalternity, Writing

The present issue of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies* interrogates how common men and women used different modes of writing to keep, shape, and contest social memory in the early modern world. Mapping a wide-ranging geography that expands from Lyon to Cuzco, and from the Atlantic island of Annobón to Palermo, the works included in this volume explore the relation between often – though not always – individual ‘acts of assertive literacy’ (Justice 1994, 24) and collective modes of remembrance among social groups who were not, in principle, expected to write.

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What role did writing and reading play in common sense notions of living historically? How did common men and women in different parts of the world use writing to defend, reinterpret, or dispute custom? How did writing and reading contribute to the creation or resignification of local *sites of memory* – ‘any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community’ (Nora 1996, xvii)? Did the interplay between orality and writing have a significant role in the ways historical events were remembered, commemorated, or forgotten? In this issue of *JEMS*, scholars working in different geographical areas and disciplinary traditions address these and other questions in order to think broadly about the relationship between subaltern writing and popular memory in the early modern world.

The reader will find essays on a wide variety of topics: the memory of popular revolt in early modern Europe, the autobiographies of Mediterranean captives, and forms of colonial literacy. There are interventions on the African vernacularization of European chivalric stories and on letter writing by women and same-sex lovers; on the textual transmission of a lost orality of conquest and on the role of indigenous memory in colonial historical writing and legal practice. Other contributions discuss letters of manumission, riddles, graffiti, pamphlets, and Inquisitorial depositions. As we will see, the relationship between subaltern writing and the social memory of the popular classes is a capacious avenue of research, and one that the editors hope this volume will contribute to spark and encourage in the years to come.

The idea behind the volume, as well as the essays themselves, build on previous scholarly endeavors. On the one hand, this project connects to the long tradition of studies on subaltern writing, as explained at greater length in the Introduction. In this field, the contribution of Italian historiography since the late 1970s (Bartoli Langeli and Petrucci 1978) and, in particular, after the opening in the 1980s of the first ‘archivi della scrittura popolare’¹ (Pieve Santo Stefano, this with nuances, Trento and Genoa) is remarkable. Although most of this research focuses on modern history, it should be noted that, already in the 1960s, Armando Petrucci explored the writing of the subaltern classes in earlier periods, such as Ancient Rome. After the Perugia congress of 1977, ‘Alfabetismo e cultura scritta nella storia della società italiana’,² and together with Attilio Bartoli Langeli, Petrucci published some theoretical and methodological reflections on the history of literacy and written culture, noting that ‘the study of the graphic testimonies produced by the subaltern classes or oriented to them was of particular interest’. They also pointed out some documentary repositories where these sources could be traced (Petrucci 1978, 454; 454-456).³

Studies on popular senses of the past, moreover, have brought to light the complex interrelation between custom, collective memory, and social struggle. In early modern Europe, Andy Wood has argued that a usable past was key in conflicts over economic and political resources in the present. Local memory was the foundation of custom and legitimacy, and it was key in shaping ‘vernacular landscapes’. No doubt, ‘oral tradition was a political resource’, but Wood has shown how orality interacted with other textual and written ways of remembrance (2013, 285; 247-286). Guy Beiner analyzed in depth the reasons for the calculated and systematic oblivion surrounding a popular insurrection in Northern Ireland led by Protestants in the context of the Great Irish Rebellion of 1798. In contrast with ‘social memory’, Beiner explores the workings and relevance of ‘social forgetting’, which should not be confused with collective

¹ (Archives of popular writing).

² (Literacy and written culture in the history of Italian society).

³ For an overall evaluation of Petrucci’s approach to subaltern writing and reading, see Castillo Gómez (2022).

amnesia. The involvement of protestants in an anti-British uprising complicated the division of Northern Irish society along religious and political lines, and thus gave way to concerted attempts at forgetfulness. By studying 'the troubled afterlife of the rebellion' in a wealth of written documentary evidence, Beiner offers 'an archaeology of social forgetting ... an excavation of a monument to amnesia' (2018, 42). In the early modern period and beyond, some events become 'sites of oblivion' rather than sites of memory.

In line with Benedict Anderson's (1983) classic argument, Leith Davis has recently explored the role of the expanded availability of print in consolidating national collective memories in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (2022). In turn, the status of print in the changing media landscape of the late seventeenth century would rise, Davis argues, thanks to its association with the cultural memory of important national events. Jasper van der Steen, on his part, explored the two opposing narratives around the Dutch Revolt and argued that public memory around those events became the arena of fierce contestation in the Low Countries from the very outset of the hostilities. Against the modernist assumption that only nationalism explains the rise of popular national conscience, van der Steen argues that strong ideas around shared collective history can be found in previous generations. The present issue aims at contributing to this growing body of scholarship on 'popular modes of engagement with the past' (2015, 18) by placing them in direct conversation with classic and emerging arguments on subaltern writing and literacies.

Understood as the 'systematic regulation of reading and writing' (Guillory 1993, 18; 3-82), literacy allowed for relatively rigid forms of exclusion in the early modern period – particularly when gender and racial regimes of inequality intersected with class. But literacy was also a site of contestation. Armando Petrucci suggested that 'in a society that is only partially literate the ability to write represents a privilege in social, economic and, of course, cultural terms; and those who are excluded suffer from it and, whenever they are aware of it, will tend to fight to conquer it, individually or in a group' (Petrucci and Castillo Gómez 2002, 25). Subalternity, as will be more thoroughly explored in the Introduction, did not entail a complete deprivation of access to the written word, and scholarship on partial literacies, collective reading, or informal schooling, among other topics, increasingly emphasizes the centrality of the letter in the daily lives of the popular classes. The Reformation and the so-called 'educational revolutions' (Stone 1964; Kagan 1974) contributed significantly to the rise in literacy rates during the early modern period, although institutional contexts and learning experiences varied widely – and hierarchically – throughout the period. Memory and writing played a crucial role in litigation, local political culture, and the everyday economies of the poor and the middling sort. The present volume builds on this scholarship by focusing on the role of subaltern writing and popular literacies in the production, transmission, and dispute of the historical in local communities throughout the early modern world.

Some characteristically early modern historical processes brought about radical transformations in the relationship between memory, writing, and class. First and foremost, perhaps, the printing revolution. When evaluating the impact of the new technology, scholars have tended to adhere to a more *revolutionary* or a more *gradualist* approach to the historical phenomena associated with the movable type. While Elizabeth Eisenstein famously considered 'the advent of printing as inaugurating a new cultural era in the history of Western man' (1979, 33), other scholars, in contrast, argued that 'print needs to be seen less in terms of a radical break than in those of an environment combining speech, manuscript, and print in mutual interaction' (Johns 2002, 120, n. 34, 1998; see also Petrucci 1990). Regardless of our position, there is little doubt that the printing press gave way in early modern Europe to new ways of thinking about the

relationship between memory and the written word. The relative graphic closure of the printed text allowed for a more durable and stable relation between writing and memory (Bouza 1998, 38). Mary Carruthers, moreover, maintained that, while the value of memory persisted beyond the transformations brought about by the mechanical reproduction of written texts, the new technology entailed a clear divide between the ‘fundamentally memorial’ character of medieval culture and the modern age, which would bring about a ‘documentary’ culture (1994, 8).

While apparently less consequential for the history of literacy, the military revolution gave way to large-scale modes of socialization that relied, to a certain extent, on writing and reading (Amelang 1994; Martínez 2016). Moreover, the massive mobilization associated with the first globalization prompted or accelerated the emergence of a number of popular genres of writing, from *relaciones* and *cartas de Indias*, to *avvisi*, newsheets, broadside prints, etc. At the same time, European imperial aggression and expansion destroyed or radically transformed very disparate literate cultures, writing ecologies, and cultures of memory. To what extent did these large-scale historical developments affect the role of writing in the spatial and material plotting of popular memory at the local or regional levels?

The present volume, in fact, contains a sizeable number of contributions on colonial Latin America that pay attention to the vexed relationship between orality and writing, textual transmission, and indigenous memory. As Ángel Rama argued in his influential *La ciudad letrada* (*The Lettered City*) (1984), imperial bureaucracy in the colonial Americas was not only an instrumental conglomerate of administrative practices, people, and institutions to conduct government, but also a perfect exclusionary machine to build and maintain colonial power through the unequal distribution of literacy and cultural capital. Scholarship on colonial Latin American textual production, however, has substantially qualified Rama’s claims in the last two decades: mestizos, indios, and people of African descent challenged this exclusionary system and used writing, translation, and interpretation in strategic and creative ways to build a place for themselves in colonial society, as well as to contest the memory of conquest and colonization (Jouve Martín 2005; Rappaport and Cummins 2012; McDonough 2014; Ramos and Yannakakis 2014; Dyck 2015; Brewer-García 2020; Gruzinski 2023). Specialists in urban history, visual culture, Mesoamerican codices or Andean quipus have argued, moreover, for an extension of our notions of literacy (León Llerena 2023). Rappaport and Cummins, for instance, suggested that scholars should pay attention to the interaction between different forms of literacy, whether verbal, visual, legal, or even urban: ‘to understand indigenous literacy, we need to go beyond the written word. It is precisely in the learning of perspective by walking the streets of a *reducción*, the observation of a corregidor kissing a royal decree, the recounting of a dream sequence that mirrors a painting, the introduction of Spanish tilework in a wattle-and-daub Andean village, that we can begin to perceive the process through which such cognitive transformation [undergone by native people] occurred’ (2012, 254).

While specific uses and traditions of popular writing are often too fragile or invisible, several strands of scholarship have striven to retrieve and interrogate them. Scholars have studied the different historical regimes of preservation and destruction and the kinds of policies and institutions have allowed for the storage or disappearance of subaltern written memory. As we will discuss more in depth in the Introduction, Marxist historians such as E. P. Thompson or Eric Hobsbawm, or cultural historians such as Arlette Farge and Natalie Zemon Davis, among many others, have insistently reminded us of the importance of recovering the written traces of the popular classes’ cultural and political agency. The intrinsic difficulties of working on popular writing in the early modern period is also related to the relative scarcity of studies of memory for the same period. The boom of memory studies (Hutton 2016) in the last few decades, on

its part, has tended to focus on the twentieth century. This issue attempts to recenter early modernity as a period of consequential transformations in the relationship between writing, memory, and forms of subordination and exclusion based on race, gender, and class.

After an Introduction that dwells on the conceptual articulation – subalternity, writing, memory – that prompted the project in the first place, the volume opens with a section that focuses on life writing and social memory. In ‘Tracing Lives: Writing, Memory and Popular Autobiography’ we have collected several essays that dig out the biographical fragments and life traces left by the common people of the early modern period. While relatively wide-ranging in terms of geography, all of the case studies included essays which can be mapped onto a vaguely Mediterranean landscape.

‘During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for enslaved and freed men and women living in the Iberian region it was unusual, although still possible, to obtain direct access to writing’. This statement from his conclusion sums up the purpose of Fernando Bouza’s contribution, ‘Forged Letters: Counterfeit Manumission Certificates and Subaltern Writing Practices as Used by Enslaved Individuals in Early Modern Iberia’. Through meticulous archival research that pays attention to different documentary types (*cartas de horro* and *horro por maravedies*), Bouza reveals the uses of literacy by enslaved and freed people in early modern Spain. Importantly, some of these documents contained traces of life stories. While occasionally these forms of writing get us close to a kind of minimal autobiographical subjectivity and bear witness to forms of solidarity among the enslaved, others point to the cancellation of the past, to the erasure of personal and social memory. The article also retraces the existence of a market for forged manumission letters, to the point of requiring the intervention of Castile’s Cortes in 1551 and 1570. In this context, the case of Juan Rodríguez Prieto is particularly telling: an enslaved Afro-descendant who forged a letter of freedom for a fellow enslaved person. The exceptionality of Juan Rodríguez’s case is complemented in Bouza’s contribution by his attention to documents written by notaries on behalf of enslaved and freed people.

José Luis Loriente Torres moves on to explore yet another instance in which traces of life writing are thoroughly shaped by the coercive power of legal institutions – in this case, the Inquisition – which paradoxically allowed some room for creative freedom. In ‘The “Discursos de la Vida” in Inquisitorial Documentation: Autobiography between Orality and Memory’, Loriente Torres takes as his point of departure General Inquisitor Fernando Valdés’ 1561 instructions for inquisitorial legal procedure, which required defendants to produce oral accounts of their lives known as ‘trazas’ or ‘discursos de la vida’. Based on a corpus of over one thousand texts, the article devotes some attention to establishing their specificity as a documentary type and as a peculiar form of micro-autobiography or ‘oral autobiography’, as Amelang (2011) called them. While mediated by the lettered practices of notaries and scribes, these texts often bear the mark of the defendants’ predominantly oral culture – they are additive, redundant, illative texts that abound in direct speech and display what Walter Ong (2012) referred to as materiality, a closeness to the human lifeworld of the defendant, or to what Franco Franceschi (1991) called ‘the language of memory’. Loriente Torres’ contribution to the study of this form of ‘collaborative life writing’ closes with a more in-depth look at one particular case study, that of Francisco de la Bastida, a young defendant prosecuted for having tried to pass for an official of the Inquisition.

The Holy Office, now in Sicily, is also the context for Anna Clara Basilicò’s contribution to this section and the volume. In ‘“Becoming” Subalterns: Writing and Scribbling in Early Modern Prison’, Basilicò focuses on the graffiti of the inquisitorial prison of Palermo, a corpus of writing that has recently attracted the attention of other scholars (Fiume and García

Arenal 2018a and 2018b; Fiume 2021; Foti 2023). A large part of the article is devoted to the discussion of established theories of the subaltern – Gramsci, Spivak, Ginzburg – which sets the background for her proposal of imprisonment as a form of temporary subalternity – for many of the prisoners of the Holy Office belonged to the ruling classes. Basilicò, moreover, dwells on the paradoxes of a form of writing that, despite being exposed, could hardly be said to be public, for it allowed only for a limited number of conversations between the different prisoners subsequently occupying a particular cell or quarter of the prison. In critical dialogue with Giovanna Fiume and Giuseppe Pitré, some of the main experts on this corpus of graffiti, Basilicò warns against the idealization of the victims. The same that can be said, she argues, of traditional readings of a poem by Michele Moraschino in one of the cells, where the mention of blood as ink should not be interpreted literally, but in relation to the Petrarchan tradition of poets such as Sicilian Antonio Veneziano. Additionally, this contribution considers the weight of those proper names we know, which would turn signed graffiti into a form of self-fashioning and assertion of individuality.

The section closes with a piece on popular autobiography. If the documents studied in the previous essays provided enticing yet always fragmentary glimpses of subaltern life stories and writing, the last one focuses on rich, full-fledged first-person narratives. In ‘Describing Otherness in Captives’ Autobiographies in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries’, Teresa Peláez surveys three autobiographies written by early modern soldiers of commoner origin who experienced and narrated captivity: the Aragonese Jerónimo Pasamonte, the Castilian Diego Galán, and the Portuguese João Mascarenhas. In her essay, Peláez explores the representation of Islamic societies, people, and states in different Mediterranean locales, from Algiers to Istanbul. Liminal figures such as renegades and old captives, whose identities and allegiances are more in flux, take center stage. Part of the othering cultural work done by these autobiographies is due, Peláez argues, to the captive’s need to be reintegrated to Christian society: there was little room for sympathetic or neutral representations of the religious and political enemy, who was also the enslaver of the writers. Despite this, and the pressures of political conflict between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, Peláez argues that, as a genre, autobiography allowed a limited space for narrating inter-faith forms of sociability and more neutral depictions of Islamic life.

The title of the next section, ‘Writing and Rebellion’, is an homage to Steven Justice’s (1994) foundational book on the relation between popular literacy, the material text and premodern social protest, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381*. As one of the contributors to this rubric puts it, the focus on writing, and its concealment in official historiography, ‘shows the extent to which the memory of insurrections and their obscuring play a part in the formation of social and political identities’ (Béroujon). Or as Justice himself said it, in reference to the Great Rebellion of 1381, ‘The story of how the rising was remembered is the story of how it was forgotten, of the cultural and psychic machinery that engaged to keep it in the preterite’ (Justice 1994, 193; see also Petrucci 2002).

In ‘“Unions et germanies”: Armed Mobilization, Plebeian Politicisation and Historical Memory in the Kingdom of Valencia (Fourteenth-Seventeenth Centuries)’, Mariana V. Parma offers a thorough review of the Valencian *agermanats*, who in 1519-1522 frontally challenged the authority of King Charles V and managed to carry on for a few years and partially institutionalize a successful revolt. A thoroughly anti-seigneurial uprising, some of its leaders explicitly aspired to ‘leave no memory of the nobility’. And in fact, as in other popular rebellions of early modern Europe, the burning of manorial and state records was a common occurrence during the fighting. ‘Let there be no memory left of the viscount our enemy’, said the commoners according to chronicler Martí de Viciana. On its part, the viceregal court of the Duke of

Calabria rushed to sponsor written accounts of the events as they happened. The dispute over the memory of the rebellion started even before the armed and political conflict was settled. Parma's contribution usefully integrates the uprising of the first Germania (1519-1522) within a larger historical cycle of social conflict. First, the article looks back to previous revolts. Then, it moves on to considering the role the first Germania and its memory had in the popular rebellion that exploded in 1693. In lack of a usable writing record from the earlier rebels, and despite officially imposed oblivion, the uprising was kept alive through collective memory and oral tradition among the popular classes. The explicit reference made by the rebels of the late seventeenth century to those of the early sixteenth turned the memory of 1519-1522 into a 'cultural repertoire of struggle', according to Parma.

Anne Bérroujon's 'The Memory of Rebellion (Lyon, 1529)' is a detailed close reading and a thorough contextualization of one rebellious placard published during the Great Rebeune of Lyon in 1529. In this riot, *le povre* (the poor) – the collective signatories of the placard – raised against the city councilors and their mismanagement of grain during a time of scarcity. This food riot, as Bérroujon shows, was in fact only one in a series of popular uprisings during the previous and following years. Anonymous and defiant public writing had a role in all of them; in fact, it is possible to establish specific textual links between the letters, placards, and rebellious words of social conflicts that erupted in 1517, 1518, 1529, 1530, and 1543, Bérroujon shows. Ephemeral writing paradoxically carried along the memory of the poor people of Lyon. The article explores issues such as the semantics, visual grammar, authorship, circulation, and seizure of the placard. Bérroujon pays attention, moreover, to how place – Place des Cordeliers – and socio-professional milieus – the world of printers – conspired to ground and pass down a long-lasting popular memory, a usable past that proved essential in reactivating political identities and prompting political action in times of need. In fact, in exploring alternative memories of the Great Rebeune of Lyon, Bérroujon shows that 'writing nourish[ed] a local culture of revolt'.

Jesús Gascón Pérez's 'People, Pamphlets and Popular Mobilization in the Aragonese Rebellion of 1591' deals with the production, circulation, and consumption of subversive literature during times of social upheaval. In particular, this essay focuses on the Aragonese rebellion of 1591, which pitched King Philip II against his Aragonese subjects in a short-lived but intense constitutional conflict around the liberties of the kingdom against absolute power. Arguing against the 'aristocratic view of 1591', Gascón Pérez stresses the participation of almost all orders of society in the rebellion: nobles, knights, *infanzones*, and priests, but also craftsmen, farmers, jurists, or merchants. He centers the role of written verbal violence in the social and political conflict, which amounted to a veritable 'literary campaign' of pasquinades and Lucianesque satires, sometimes attributed to Antonio Pérez himself. Pamphlets prompted riots – at least they did in Teruel in November 1591 – and kept up the mobilization of the people for the Aragonese cause. Rebellious placards took over the public space defying the authority of the king and its officials. Royal edicts, in contrast, were torn down from the church doors. Rebellious writing, Gascón Pérez argues, was at the core of this early modern political conflict. Regardless of authorship, pasquinades combined elements from lettered and popular culture. They all circulated in manuscript form, from hand to hand. Sometimes they were dropped in the public squares, to be picked up by the people, and were of course read aloud. Students, professional scribes, priests, and even nuns contributed to their diffusion by producing multiple copies of the libelous texts.

In the next section we have grouped a coherent body of work on popular writing, indigenous literacy, and ethnic memory in the Americas during the colonial period. 'Contested Memories in Colonial Latin America' opens with Lisl Schoepflin's '“De los famosos hechos de los yndios

cañares y de sus privilegios”: Don Pedro Purqui and the Early Modern Andean Chronicle by Martín de Murua. By analyzing legal records and historiographical texts, Schoepflin explores the relation between social memory and ethnic identity in the colonial Andes. The article focuses on the role of Don Pedro Purqui, a community leader and intellectual in colonial Cuzco, in the rearticulation of the history, myth, and memory of the Cañari people through his intervention in legal processes and historical writing. The Cañari were a non-Incan Andean people that, thanks to a kind of ‘structural amnesia’ provoked by the Spanish conquest, and through Purqui’s crucial mediation, reappropriated Incan genealogy as a source of legitimacy in the colonial present. This ethnogenetical response was also a way of defending the privileged status of Cañari nobility within the Spanish colonial order. It seems that Purqui was not literate in alphabetic writing but, as Schoepflin shows by comparing the Gavin Murua and the Getty Murua – two different manuscript versions of Murúa’s chronicle –, he did intervene and mediate in the process of historiographical elaboration during the 1590s, motivating changes and erasures. Through this infiltration, Purqui crucially contributed to reshaping the collective memory and ethnic identity of the Cañari people.

Without leaving the Andes, Aude Argouse and María Eugenia Albornoz Vásquez’s contribution, titled ‘Protecting and Protesting: Notarial Exclamations and Declarations (Peru, Chile Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries)’, focuses on a legal documentary type that has not yet received proper attention: the *exclamaciones* are documents written before a notary to retract or rectify previous legal declarations. This contribution focuses on those kept in the notarial archives of Cuzco, Lima (Peru), and Santiago (Chile) from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Exclamations allowed for the visibilization of illegitimate use of force and constraint (Sternberg 2023). As legal instruments, they carried the legal memory of previous offences and allowed room for protest and complaint. Argouse and Albornoz Vásquez are in favor of centering and revising the figure of the notary, whose mediating legal role should not be seen ‘solely as a tool of European hegemony’. Among other documentary types, *exclamaciones* show that women (half of whom were illiterate), the poor, Indians, and prisoners all made recourse to the legal power of notaries. Victims of gender violence, coerced widows and children, or abused indigenous subjects all made recourse to *exclamaciones*. When *exclamaciones* were produced at the behest of a subaltern, they argue, this kind of legal and documentary practice ‘liberates dominated voices’. This tracking of the voice of the subalterns is done by paying heed to the language of the documents themselves, the turns of phrase, corrections, interventions that could contain traces of a subaltern orality and provide insight about the relationship between this and notarial practice.

In ‘Recovering the Written Traces of Hernando de Soto’s Voyage to La Florida’, Catalina Andrango-Walker retraces the steps of the Spanish conquistador in a number of colonial sources, mainly focusing on Inca Garcilaso’s *La Florida del Inca* and the *Relaçãm verdadeira*. Andrango-Walker shows how high-brow humanistic historical writing relied on the oral testimony and the amateur writing of common soldiers. The article explores the roles of the eyewitness, the oral storyteller, the scribe, and the translator in the collective and contested process of building the memory and posterity of a colonial expedition. The primary accounts of soldiers, based on eyewitnessing, were key to the regime of truth created by their interlocutors and compilers, but at the same time they were deemed unworthy of serious historical writing, and thus the memory they carried needed to be refigured. The study of textual transmission and translation also serves, in Andrango-Walker’s contribution, to trace the reverberations of indigenous memory – particularly of colonial violence – in European traditions of historical writing, such as in the case of Garcilaso’s depiction of cacique Hirrihigua.

In line with his book on indigenous literacy and memory in Paraguay’s *reducciones* (Neumann 2015), Eduardo Neumann’s ‘*Kurusu Kwatia* (Inscribed Cross): Written Culture and Indigenous

Memory in the Reductions of Paraguay (Eighteenth Century)’ studies the somewhat exceptional written culture of the Guarani in the colonial period. From the eighteenth century onwards, the indigenous people of Paraguay maintained a strong and fluid relationship with writing, especially after the crisis provoked by the redrawing of the boundaries between Spain’s and Portugal’s imperial reach in the area by the Treaty of Madrid in 1750. Indigenous subjects used writing to frequently correspond with the Jesuits and with their Spanish overlords. We know, through indirect mentions, of different forms of exposed writing in the *reducciones*, although no extant example has survived. One of these, in fact, is the use of crosses inscribed with texts used to mark the territory. In addition to crosses, they used wooden boards in churches to publicize announcements and write prayers, or for funerary inscriptions. The article also uncovers the council minutes of the indigenous communities, which from 1758 included a sort of ‘summaries of events’ (mostly military) which can be understood as a way of articulating the memory of the community. This is also the case for the inscribed cross (*kurusu kuati*) that was erected in the summer of 1756 to memorialize the battle of Caiboaté, in which 1500 Guarani were killed, together with their captain, a truly dramatic event that left a long-lasting impact in the history of the community.

The last two sections, while shorter, explore aspects that the editors consider pivotal in the overall design of the volume. In ‘Gendered Letters’, we have grouped two pieces on not so visible letter writing by women and by men accused of sodomy. In ‘Women Building the Colonial Archive: Legal Authority, Female Knowledge and Affective Mobility in the Sixteenth-Century Iberian Atlantic World’, Juan Manuel Ramírez Velázquez examines how Spanish criolla women from different walks of life used writing to increase their mobility and to profitably navigate the legal, economic, and political systems of a mobile male-dominated world. The essay focuses on the letters by Catalina de Ávila, a propertied yet commoner widow from Almodóvar del Campo in La Mancha to her son in Mexico, who had spent almost twenty years in the New World; and on the petitions of three conquistadors’ widows, Isabel de Cavallos, Ana Segura, and María de Victoria. The writing of these women opens to a connected world, shaped by the large-scale transatlantic and transpacific exchanges of the sixteenth century, and particularly by the movement of their own husbands, sons, and other absent male relatives. Their letters become the mobile carriers of news, both written and oral, local memory, and biographical trajectories. Ramírez Velázquez’s conceptualization of ‘affective mobilities’ attempts to bring together geographical displacement and the rhetorical strategies of persuasion (*movere*) that shaped their writing as a vehicle for self-fashioning and empowerment.

Juan Pedro Navarro Martínez’s ‘Letters from Sodom: “Emotional” Agency and Evidence of Sexual Crime in Early Modern Courts of Italy and Spain’, on its part, zooms in on the letters of same-sex lovers in late sixteenth-century Italy and eighteenth-century Spain. Before delving into the kind of affect embodied by this epistolary discourse, Navarro Martínez offers a reflection on the relation between early modern judicial institutions, the documentary types they produced, and the historiography of gender and dissident sexuality. In contrast with other kinds of documentation gathered or generated by the bodies in charge of disciplining sexual practice, Navarro Martínez argues, letters are a privileged place to look for what he calls the ‘emotional agency’ of the defendants. The two case studies are Domenico Pelliccia, a monk of the monastery of Subiaco (Rome) who was accused of sodomy in 1595, and Sebastián Leirado, an amateur actor processed for the same crime in Madrid in 1769. The chronological arch, and the transnational scope, allow for a comparative framework that has proven productive before for the study of other subaltern lettered practices in early modern Europe.

The two essays that make up the last section, ‘Memory in Print and Performance’, open new ways of looking at the memory of the people in relation to the materiality of writing, oral

tradition, and communal performance. In ‘Printed Riddles in Early Modern Italy: Traditional Perspectives and New Approaches’, Marco Francalanci starts by offering a complete historiographical overview of the work of Italian ethnographers, bibliographers, and folklorists on riddles. From one of the earliest extant vernacular texts, to the Renaissance collections of printed riddles, Francalanci gives weight to the written traditions of this compact, playful, and ingenious form that we may mistakenly associate mainly with its oral iterations. Some of the most important writers and collectors of riddles of the sixteenth century, Francalanci shows, were workingmen. Before becoming a *cantastorie*, Giulio Cesare Croce was a blacksmith, as was Angelo Cenni, also known as Resoluto. Sonnet and *ottava rima* gradually became the main poetic forms for the production of riddles and enigmas, and they often involved obscenity and vulgarity. They tended to be published, according to Francalanci, in very small, portable, and cheap formats, and occasionally by idiosyncratic travelling printers such as Damon Fido Pastore. This, combined with the pervasive anonymity of the genre, has historically compromised their survival and retrieval.

In his contribution (‘The Saga of Lohodann: Making Sense of an Annobonese Folktale Rooted in Carolingian Drama’), Jeroen Dewulf studies the intricate story of Lohodann, a Luso-African creole version of the medieval European paladin Roland that is recited during the Holy Week in Annobón, an Atlantic island off the coast of West Africa that is today part of Equatorial Guinea. As it survived in the late twentieth century, the performance of the legend was the responsibility of one family, and it obeyed gendered rules of transmission and inheritance. The essay begins by providing a rich historical survey of Annobón, from the Portuguese settlement to its handing over to the authority of the Spanish empire. The peculiar forms of autonomy and self-government that developed in this small island are placed in the context of the triangular slave trade that shaped the early societies of the Black Atlantic, tracing connections between Brazil and continental Africa. Dewulf offers a thorough historical excavation of a twentieth-century oral practice that harks back to medieval and early modern textual traditions in French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. The long *durée* of popular memory, carried along by a mostly illiterate community, is inextricably linked to the entangled history of colonialism in this area of the Atlantic. The institutional arrangements and the traditions of vernacular African Christianity, from confraternities to *sacristãos*, proved essential for the refashioning and transmission of the cultural memory around Roldán/Lohodann. In Annobón, Dewulf argues, the uses of this European legend are indissociable from the traditions of the *de facto* autonomous government of the people of the island and from African forms of syncretic Christianity.

In sum, the essays gathered in this volume call attention to the different uses of written culture by the subaltern classes in the early modern period. They also explore the mediations of the professionals of the pen in those circumstances in which the subaltern – often illiterate – needed their services. By focusing on topics such as indigenous literacies, writing and rebellion, oral tradition and performance, local history, life writing, or contested historiographies, these essays, considered together, offer road to the memory of the people in the enlarged world of early modernity. A ‘topography of remembrance’ (Wood 2013) that, linking the writing practices of the common people to the memory of their communities, shows that the fight over the past was also, necessarily, a dispute about the present and the future.

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Part One

Introduction



Writing, Memory and Subalternity in the Early Modern World*

Antonio Castillo Gómez

University of Alcalá (<antonio.castillo@uah.es>;)

Miguel Martínez

University of Chicago (<martinezm@uchicago.edu>)

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Abstract

In this introduction to the *JEMS* collective volume *Subaltern Writing and Popular Memory in the Early Modern World*, the editors provide a historiographical and theoretical survey on the history of subaltern forms of literacy, as well as of popular modes of remembrance, mainly focused in the early modern period. While providing examples of the ways in which literacy has been carefully policed in different societies, giving way to structures of exclusion, it also points to the more or less fluid relation that common men and women from different backgrounds established with writing, occasionally using it to record personal memory and participate in the collective shaping of the past. The essay tackles the difficulty of recovering the written traces of common men and women, while surveying the ways in which this archive of subaltern writing and memory has been creatively constructed by subsequent scholarly interventions from very different disciplines, including anthropology, paleography, sociology, epigraphy, gender and sexuality studies, and social and cultural history.

Keywords: Early Modern Period, History, Memory, Subalternity, Writing

1. *Writing, Memory and the People*

‘The job of peasants, you might say, is to stay out of the archives’. With this famous dictum from his *The Art of Not Being Governed*,

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J.C. Scott (2009, 34) summarized the antagonism between writing and the people, between the documentary and record-keeping practices of state authority, on the one hand, and the livelihood and survival of subaltern groups in the premodern world, on the other. In a way, avoiding capture by writing – in the form of tax rolls, census, enclosure acts, police reports, muster rolls, or lawsuits – might have allowed working people, women, and other subordinate groups to lead better lives. Paradoxically, thus, their lives would be traceable in the memory of humanity only to the extent that they failed to escape the trap of the archive.

There is a lot of truth to Scott's witty provocation. For some working people of the past, historylessness and nonliteracy must have been reasonably preferable options. In his ethnohistory of upland Southeast Asia, Scott also proposes that literacy is not a one-way trip: it can be lost or purposefully forgotten. Some peasant peoples of the Southeast Asian mainland massif tell themselves, in the form of oral legends, that they once had writing, when they were a lowland, state-bearing people, but at some point – often in their flight from the valleys to the hills – they abandoned literacy, or it was stolen from them. The Akha people, for instance, used to tell that they once had writing, but in their flight from the Tai to the mountains, hunger made them eat the buffalo scrolls where they kept their communal memory and they thus forgot how to read and write. Orality, says Scott, has certain advantages, for 'the absence of writing and texts provides a freedom of maneuver in history, genealogy, and legibility that frustrates state routines' (220). Oral cultures, moreover, tend to be more democratic, less rigidly stratified by the distribution of cultural capital, freer from the authority of the written letter, more reliant on collective decision. Inasmuch as writing is a technology of statecraft and empire-building, nonliteracy may even be, for some groups, a conscious resistant strategy of state-evasion. Lévi-Strauss concluded, rather gloomily, that writing 'seems rather to favor the exploitation than the enlightenment of mankind' (1968, 291). Whether we agree or not with Lévi-Strauss, it is hard to deny that for many subaltern subjects of the past writing meant more often than not taxes, punishment, and forced labor.

That antagonism between writing and the common people is real also in the medieval and early modern world. In medieval England, during the 1381 uprising, a chronicler said that those found with an inkwell would rarely escape the wrath of the rebels, who actively burned archives and documents (Justice 1994, 18). Erasing the written instruments and traces of their own oppression was in fact common in other premodern revolts. During the anti-fiscal revolt of Évora (Portugal) in 1637, 'forão trazidos ao fogo todos os livros reaes que servião aos direitos públicos, romperão as balanças donde se cobrava o novo imposto da carne ... Saquearão os cartórios, desbaratando papéis e livros judiciais' (Melo 1660, 31-32, quoted in Bouza 1998, 41, n. 63).¹ In Brittany, a revolt against the fiscal effects of stamped paper in 1675 and the outcry against seigniorial rights led again to the burning of documents seized from their *châteaux* (Bercé 2020b, 123-124). During the sack of Rome, some common Spanish soldiers used the writings of a humanist scholar who had written about them, literally, as toilet paper (Martínez 2016, 38-39). Some Diggers and Levelers, Christopher Hill showed in *The World Turned Upside Down*, occasionally aimed at classical languages: 'For the radicals Latin and Greek had been the languages of the Antichrist, as they were the languages of the universities, law, medicine, the three intellectual élites' (1975, 355). In Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part II*, rebel Jack Cade instructs to hang a clerk 'with his pen and ink-horn about his neck', for he cannot be 'an honest plain-dealing man' if he knows how to read and write (Wood 2013, 256). In many ways, it is not only that the people do not need the writing technologies of the lettered class to build

¹ (all the royal books of law were set on fire, the scales on which the new meat tax was levied were broken. They ransacked the registry offices, destroying papers and judicial books). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

and preserve their memory. It would in fact seem to be the case that their memory is in frontal opposition to literacy, writing and the class oppression that both seem to signify.

The burning of books and documents, however, was not necessarily an all-out war against the written word in general. As Justice has shown for the English revolt of 1381, the insurgents specifically targeted documents related to taxing and royal revenue, as well as the lords' manorial records. That is, they attacked 'the writing by which power was exercised' (1994, 44), the legal instruments of their own subjection. University libraries and church service books were spared. 'The insurgent animus against the archive', Justice says, 'was not the revenge of a residually oral culture against the appurtenances of a literacy that was threatening because alien and mysterious' (41). Rather, the destruction was selective, carefully planned, and tactical. They aimed at recreating the documentary instruments of law, custom, and memory. 'Familiarity, not ignorance, bred the rebels' contempt of official culture, and that contempt was entirely provisional; they were ready to use its language, and even to practice its exactions, in the name of their project' (Justice 1994, 64). What they wanted was in fact to replace one documentary culture with another better aligned with their interests.

If the permanence of the document could have certain disadvantages for the working classes of preindustrial societies, it also provided a powerful mechanism of community building. Writing was a malleable instrument to preserve history, identity, and to defend themselves in the present. For a few decades now, in fact, scholarship on popular forms of writing and remembrance have painted a complex and vexed relationship between literacy and the people, as well as between writing, agency, and memory. In *From Memory to Written Record*, Michael Clanchy (1979) explored how writing, particularly in the form of charters and other legal instruments, became an increasingly familiar presence in the English countryside during the late Middle Ages. The borders between orality and writing are not as impermeable as we once thought, and historians and anthropologists of literacy have suggested an oral-literate continuum (Goody 2010). In one of the most substantial recent interventions – and one that is at the root of the editors' thinking about this collective volume –, Andy Wood argued that, in contrast with this seeming hostility to the written word, 'There was a dynamic interplay between literacy, orality, memory and custom' among the poor and middling sort of early modern England (2013, 50).

Let us consider an example of this complex and dynamic interplay between writing, orality, and memory in the early modern period. After the defeat of Castile's Comunero revolt in 1522, emperor Charles V was determined to completely root out its memory. In this case, it was the king who repeatedly ordered to burn all documentary records produced by the rebels. In Toledo, the house of Juan de Padilla and María Pacheco, the main leaders of the popular uprising, was razed to the ground. 'Derribaron las casas de Juan de Padilla hasta los cimientos, aráronlas y sembráronlas de sal, por que la tierra o suelo donde había nacido el capitán de tantos males que se habían concertado y fraguado no produjese aun yerbas silvestres' (Sandoval 1955-1956, Book IX, ch. 28).² In the middle of the devastated property a stone was planted 'adrón, con un letrero que contaba su vida y fin desdichado'³ and denigrated the memory of the insurgents. The result of the royal attempt to control the memory of the rebellion through writing was somewhat paradoxical, for the empty loft would forever be called 'plaza de Juan de Padilla' by the people of Toledo. The name of the most popular leader of the uprising would be carried on by the power of writing amplified with local memory and oral tradition. And indeed, invoking the very name of

² (They tore down the houses of Juan de Padilla to the foundations, flattened them and sowed them with salt, so that the soil where the captain of so many evils had been born would not even produce wild herbs).

³ (with a sign that told of his life and unhappy end).

Padilla, whether orally or in writing, would suffice in later years to call the people to rail against injustice (Castañeda Tordera 2008; Bouza 2013; Merle 2017). In this and other cases, such as the Neapolitan uprising of 1647,

the conflicts raised by public lettering resulted in acts of *damnatio memoriae*. The destruction or substitution of certain inscriptions, images, statues and symbols, whether in religious conflicts, anti-seignorial revolts or revolutions of greater political significance, was a way of actively intervening in the memory and the re-signification of public spaces. (Castillo Gómez 2020, 322)

2. *Defining the Subaltern*

To engage with this topic effectively, it is crucial first to define the social actors that will be the focus of our reflection. The socio-political concept of the ‘subaltern’ finds its origins in the work of Antonio Gramsci, who explored this concept in his *Quaderni dal carcere* (*Prison Notebooks*), penned between 1929 and 1935, as well as through the letters he authored while incarcerated. Guido Liguori notes that Gramsci initially applied the term to a description of the army’s junior officers; subsequently, from the third notebook onwards, he used it to set the subaltern classes against the ruling class; and ultimately, he endowed the term with a cultural dimension (Liguori 2011 and 2015). In a letter dated August 8, 1933, to Yulca (Julia), Gramsci deliberated on who would explain to his son Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, a book he had recently sent them. He doubted his wife’s suitability for the task, believing she would assume a subaltern rather than a dominant role, expressed in the first person:

In general, it seems to me that you put yourself (and not only in this connection) in a subaltern rather than a dominant position. That is, you assume the position of someone incapable of historically criticizing ideologies by dominating them, explaining and justifying them as a historical necessity of the past; of someone who, brought into contact with a specific world of emotions, feels attracted or repulsed by it, remaining always within the sphere of emotion and immediate passion. (1994, vol. II, 318)

According to Gramsci, subaltern groups are those historically sidelined from political, economic, ideological, or cultural power, typically commandeered by those wielding ‘hegemony’, or the ruling class. For Gramsci, the ruling class is singular, whereas subaltern classes are plural. ‘The history of subaltern social groups,’ he stated, ‘is necessarily fragmented and episodic’; thus, ‘by definition, subaltern classes are disunited and cannot become unified until they are able to form a “State”. Their history is thus entwined with that of civil society, representing a fragmented and discontinuous aspect of civil society’s history’ (1975, vol. III, 2283 and 2288).

While Gramsci’s thesis predominantly addresses social class, a cornerstone of Marxist thought, he did not shy away from integrating reflections on gender, albeit not yet articulated through a feminist lens. In the *Quaderni*, he parallels the history of women with that of subaltern groups, arguing that ‘“machismo” can, in a sense, be equated to class dominance’ (2286). Earlier, in a critique of a 1917 performance in Turin of Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, Gramsci focused on the dominant position women occupied within the bourgeois family structure. He lauded Nora Helmer, the play’s protagonist, for her bold decision to leave her family in search of self-identity, thereby escaping the ‘hypocrisy of sacrifice’ that bound women to their husbands, families, or those in need (Gramsci 1917). This vision of women’s emancipation aligns with a conceptualization of subalternity that, while rooted in class, also acknowledges the gender dimension.

Thus, subalternity embodies a state of marginalization and subservience across class, gender, and race dimensions, among other forms of dominance. While women are subjected to various forms of patriarchal violence, this notion does not erase the class disparities among them, particularly in relation to written culture, which is the object of the present volume. These disparities elucidate the unequal access and appropriation opportunities historically available, highlighting that despite shared gender, the experiences of women from noble or bourgeois backgrounds significantly differ from those of peasant or working-class origins. Certain exclusions universally affect all women, yet others are distinctly shaped by class-based discrimination.

3. *Subalternity, Gender and Written Culture*

Regarding subaltern individuals (both male and female), it has been argued that their condition stems from being deprived of their own voice, as the ability to convey their own experiences would entail leaving behind their subaltern status. This was the thesis put forward by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her influential essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988), which has had a significant impact in the field of postcolonial studies and beyond. These propositions directly challenged intellectuals and members of the academic community, questioning their ability to speak on behalf of and to represent the subaltern. Although this issue is central to Subaltern Studies (Beverly 1999), it is our intent to consider the capacity subalterns have had historically to embrace writing, to make use of it, and even to transmit a certain memory of themselves and their communities.

The active denial of access to literacy is a key factor in explaining the social evolution of writing and its conceptualization as a knowledge restricted, to a greater or lesser extent, to the ruling class. This is supported by the following excerpt from the *Epistola directa ad inclitum et magnificum virum dominum Petrum Fernandi de Velasco Comitem de Haro* by Alonso de Cartagena, written after 1442 (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Mss/9208). In it, the Bishop of Burgos attempts to convince his friend, the Count of Haro, that divine will has determined that knowledge to be distributed according to different estates so that each can better fulfill their role:

It is not possible, among such a multitude of people, that all dedicate themselves to the study of books; nor would it be convenient for the republic, for the full and prosperous governance of which many, or rather infinite, trades, arts, and industries are necessary. To spend the time of those who practice these trades [i.e., the laborers] in the study of the sciences would indeed be very harmful (Cartagena post 1442, 5v, quoted by Lawrance 1991, 86).

An illiterate peasant is preferred over a learned one, which is not unlike the view held by British slave owners in the seventeenth century (and later), who were terrified at the mere thought of a literate Black population. Hence their firm opposition, especially in the American colonies and notably in South Carolina, to King Charles II of England's decree in 1660 ordering that indigenous people, servants, and slaves in the British colonies be instructed in Christian doctrine (Cornelius 1991, 13).

Regarding women, at the end of the seventeenth century, Nicolás Antonio included in his work *Bibliotheca Hispaniae sive Hispanorum* (1672) an appendix titled *Gynaeceum Hispaniae Minervae sive de gentis nostrae foeminis doctrina claris ad bibliothecam scriptorium* (vol. II, 337-347), written around 1648, in which he denounced their exclusion from study as a male strategy to keep them away from any form of power: 'Hence, [women] have encountered this more unfair fate of ignorance and exclusion from all disciplines, if not from the usurpation by men, who, to maintain their command, have always kept women away from the instru-

ments of command' (Antonio 1672, 337; see also Luna 1996, 37-38).⁴ Without dismissing the significant development of female writing in the early modern period, for which there is a constantly growing body of scholarship, Nicolás Antonio's words reflect a reality shaped by the cultural discrimination women have faced throughout history.⁵ His reflection can be linked to the assessment made in the 1970s by Italian linguist Giorgio Raimondo Cardona regarding the history of writing as a male prerogative, considering the dominance men have exercised over it, not only in Western culture: 'Where writing is not a common heritage, it is very difficult for women to write. Indeed, a woman who writes can seem an absurdity, a contradiction' (1987, 95).

In pre-industrial European societies, the dominant patriarchal and Christian discourse closely monitored the relationship between women and written culture, authorizing or disavowing readings and writing exercises based on whether they reinforced or deviated from their moral education and the social role assigned to them, as can be traced in moral treatises, confessor manuals, educational texts, and even the fictional literature of those centuries, within what Isabel Morant called the 'discourses of the good life' (2002).⁶ In this framework, women were expected to read what was permitted and to write primarily within the private sphere, which did not prevent some from overcoming these barriers and even effectively intervening in public opinion, particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although these were generally literate women of aristocratic and bourgeois origin (Landes 1988; McDowell 1998; Villegas de la Torre 2012; van Elk 2017).

Both among them and among subaltern men, the relationship with writing and reading must always be analyzed from the tension between coercion and subversion, between the norms that try to enclose imagination and the individual freedom to transgress them. Thus, we encounter men and women who defied silence and left a memory of their lives, a testimony of their creation, or traces of their intervention in various matters, from the most domestic to others of public dimension.

4. *The Common People in the Archive*

'The document is not merely unsold merchandise from the past; it is a construct of the society that produced it, shaped by the power dynamics within that society'. These words by medieval historian Jacques Le Goff underscore that written documents are never neutral. They are, fundamentally, the product of 'a conscious or unconscious assembly of the history, era, and society from which they originated, as well as of subsequent periods during which they continued to exist, perhaps overlooked, during which they were still manipulated, even in silence' (Le Goff 1982, 452 and 454). Aligning with this perspective, Italian paleographer Armando Petrucci remarked that 'dominance over memory and oblivion, as social practices, is predominantly political and constitutes a fundamental aspect of the control and governance of an advanced society' (2002, 116). Paul Thompson experienced this directly in his research on the written remnants of subaltern classes. He discovered that the private

⁴ (Unde ergo sibi contigisse iniquiorem hanc imperitiæ a sortem, et sequestratæ ab iis omnis disciplinæ, nisi ab usurpatione virorum, qui, ne minus imperent, ab instrumentis imperandi foeminae arcuere'). The manuscript of this text is kept at the Biblioteca Nacional de España (Mss/7343).

⁵ To avoid overburdening this introduction with bibliographic references, we refer to the recent synthesis by Plebani (2019), where mentions of Italy are complemented with others of France, England, Spain, or Germany, a rarity in other approaches to female writing in early modernity that are much more geographically focused, as is the case with much of the Anglo-Saxon and French scholarly production.

⁶ On women and reading in early modern Europe, see Snook 2005; Gagliardi 2010, 25-71; von Tippelskirch 2011.

correspondence archived in England revealed a stark imbalance: it was substantial in the case of letters exchanged among landlords but almost non-existent for the epistolary interactions of the common folk (Thompson 1984, 54).

As outlined at the start of this essay, as the ultimate embodiment of the power of writing and written memory, archives predominantly highlight the ruling class, institutions, and those in positions of power across political, economic, religious, or cultural domains. They also influence historical practice and the formation of collective memory and national identity, as pointed out by J.M. Schwartz and Terry Cook: 'Archives – as records – wield power over the shape of historical scholarship, collective memory, and national identity, [shaping our understanding of ourselves] as individuals, groups, and societies' (2002, 2). They added that the professional conduct of archivists, far from being neutral and objective, involves active decisions that impact the preservation, organization, and interpretation of archival collections, thereby influencing social memory (2-3).

Thus, we encounter a genuine archival conflict between the selected and transmitted documentation and that which is overlooked, destroyed, or disregarded, marginalized for not aligning with the interests of the powerful or the prevailing historical narratives. As archives serve the State, the Church, the nobility, and various institutions and corporations, they tend to perpetuate a form of documentary elitism. They illuminate the written traces of some, typically the elites, while obscuring those of others, notably the subaltern classes. However, this does not preclude the existence of traces from these groups (Castillo Gómez 2021), albeit often because there were numerous administrative and judicial instances in which their members were compelled to produce written documents to identify themselves, verify salary receipt, claim an inheritance, submit a petition to authority, or execute a will.⁷ In many cases, the involvement of the subaltern might have been limited to signing, a significant act of assertion and visibility in itself (Fraenkel 1992), or to drafting brief texts. Yet there were instances where literacy skills were demonstrated through letters, account books, memoirs, libels, or fully autograph claims. Arlette Farge observed that the working classes, while 'less adept at wielding the written word' that 'does not mean that they lived without constructing representations of themselves,' concluding that 'The archive has many resources in this vein, and you need only take the trouble to look for them' (2013, 102). Despite poverty and deprivation, illiteracy, and the popular distrust towards writing, archives and libraries offer very diverse testimonies to bring us closer to the written memory of those from below.

Although not referring to the early modern period, one of the key moments in the valorization of subaltern writings as legitimate historical documents, and the consequent concern for their preservation, was the search for letters from Polish emigrants in the United States. Led by sociologists from the Chicago School William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, in the early decades of the twentieth century, the result of this research project was published in *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, which appeared in five volumes between 1918 and 1920, and included the gathering of 764 letters by common people of peasant origin. When Znaniecki returned to Poland, he prompted the Institute of Sociology in Poznan to organize a contest of 'worker memoirs' in 1921, which saw some continuity in subsequent decades (Markiewicz-Lagneau 1976).

While these important precedents should not be overlooked, scholars tend to situate the emergence of new forms of historiographical attention to the writing and memory of the subaltern in the 1960s and 1970s. Amid the rise of quantitative methodologies linked to demography and sociology, in 1963 French historian François Furet contended that 'the quantitative study

⁷ For the French case, an excellent exercise in this direction is the work coordinated by Yves Marie Bercé (2020a).

of past societies' was the sole method to reintegrate the 'lower' classes into history (1963, 459). Years later, Carlo Ginzburg challenged this view as it doomed these social groups to remain silent (2019, xxii).⁸ In the same decades, several British historians, proponents of the 'history from below' approach (Thompson 1966), included threatening letters from peasants and workers in their studies. Eric Hobsbawm and Georges Rudé (1968) occasionally studied some such letters, signed by the legendary Captain Swing, which peasants sent to rural landowners during the agricultural revolts in England in 1830. E.P. Thompson employed similar testimonies more extensively in his research on peasant and proletarian protests in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (1977). Nevertheless, Hobsbawm later mentioned the difficulty of understanding the thinking of the lower classes based on their own testimonies rather than their actions, given that 'for most of the past people were generally illiterate anyway' (1985, 67).

5. *Writing and Subaltern Memory*

The written evidence of the subaltern classes is notably rarer the further back we look, among other reasons because, even in societies with high literacy rates, the continuous use of writing and reading has been 'restricted to a very narrow elite of the population, typically belonging to the upper-middle bourgeoisie' (Petrucci 1978a, 41). Excluding graffiti, which traces the written presence of common people back to Ancient Rome (Funari 1989; Garraffoni 2022), the engagement of subaltern classes with written culture becomes increasingly visible in late medieval Europe. This period saw the spread of vernacular literacy and the emergence of professional avenues that required writing skills. A variety of individuals – traders, craftsmen, some peasants, and certain women – adopted the pen and paper to write personally, or through intermediaries, letters, account books, memory books, or *libri di famiglia* (family books). Essentially, these were characterized by a textual hybridity, blending accounting entries, family milestones, and notable historical events.

James Amelang notes that 'the transition from the Middle Ages to the early modern era witnessed a significant increase in the writing and circulation of what might be termed the literature of personal experience' (1998, 119). This was represented by a diverse array of texts that could be classified as autobiographical or ego-documents, such as strict autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, family books, spiritual autobiographies, personal chronicles, travel writings, and autobiographical fiction, not overlooking other genres where popular autobiography found a place (account books, correspondence, technical and trade books, and even the many political and religious pamphlets by humble authors that proliferated in England during the revolutionary decades of the 1640s and 1650s (28-41).

Through this literature of personal experience, subalterns not only reinforced their familial and social ties but also made interventions in social memory, as many of these texts also ventured into history, offering a perspective from below on the events of their time, some known firsthand and others through different means, including oral transmission or gazettes and newssheets. A veritable testament to this memorialist orientation is the 'diary' of Joan Guàrdia, a peasant from Santa María de Corcó (l'Esquirol), supplemented with notes by his son Antoni Joan. Initially described by the author as a 'book of blank paper for writing accounts and my dealings', it soon transitions from accounting entries to family notes and accounts of the year's

⁸ On the occasion of receiving one of the Balzan Prizes in 2010, Ginzburg reiterated in his speech that 'in any society, power relations condition access to documentation and its characteristics,' which means that 'the voices of those belonging to oppressed and/or minority groups usually reach us filtered through external, if not hostile, figures: chroniclers, notaries, bureaucrats, judges, and so on' (2011, 11).

significant events, plagues and famines, festive celebrations, and notably, the War of the Reapers, the Catalan revolt against King Philip IV (Pladevall i Font and Simon i Tarrés 1986, 31-120).⁹

Many of these texts are autograph manuscripts, though there are also instances where they were written by another hand or even dictated. For instance, the spiritual autobiography of Margarida Altamira, an illiterate woman from a humble mountain village family, who was judged by the Holy Office of Barcelona in 1681 after being denounced by a neighbor for baptizing an illegitimate child twice (Amelang 1990, 207-208). During the interrogation, she recounted ‘discurso de su vida’ (the story of her life) as happened in many other cases, forming a sort of oral autobiographies or *trazas de vida* (Amelang 2011; Lorient 2023b).

Besides these texts, preserved in many cases in family archives, in the early modern period there was a remarkable strain of writings from ordinary people that was filed in judicial and police records as legal evidence. Arlette Farge’s exploration of eighteenth-century French police archives yielded a series of works that, in addition to approaching the life of the Parisian populace, recovered the voices of some common men and women, as recorded in personal documents that were seized by the authorities (1994, 2007 and 2019). Among these are parchment bracelets placed on the wrists of corpses – also men and women – with brief descriptions of the person, even though many of the individuals carrying these identity notes were illiterate (Farge 2003). Like her, Natalie Zemon Davis has written memorable pages about women on the margins (1995), as well as a model study on the narrative power of pardon petitions addressed by ordinary people to the French king during the sixteenth century (1987). Indeed, at that time, one of the resources the archive offers for the written memory of subaltern classes lies in the petitions directed by commoners to rulers and institutions seeking some favor, especially as they recounted their lives and devised various narrative strategies to convince or move the recipient of the plea (Würgler 2001; Nubola and Würgler 2002; Nubola and Würgler 2004; Santiago Medina 2019; Waddell and Peacey 2024).

For the French Ancien Régime, the police records of the Archives de la Bastille, stored in the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, have become formidable repositories for locating the written traces of many infamous lives (Dutrav-Lecoin and Muzerelle 2010). In other contexts, inquisitorial and judicial archives, both civil and ecclesiastical, serve this same purpose. During the early modern period, it was common for these proceedings to incorporate documents seized from the accused as evidence. Thus, a significant portion of the letters from ordinary people unearthed for the territories of the Spanish monarchy comes from inquisitorial and civil judicial archives (Sánchez Rubio and Testón Núñez 1999 and 2014; Martínez Martínez 2007; Usunáriz 2015).¹⁰ In addition to these types of documentary series, the personal correspondence of emigrants to America has been located within administrative files processed by the Council of the Indies, in the form *autos de bienes de difuntos* or *cartas de reclamo* (proceedings for the distribution of inheritances; letters of claim) on behalf of relatives residing in the Iberian Peninsula (Otte 1976; Macías and Morales Padrón 1991; Fernández Alcaide 2009).

Moreover, while there are some testimonies in the countryside, it is indisputable that subaltern writing is an urban phenomenon through and through, thanks to the significantly higher literacy rates. The memory of the people in the early modern world is unmistakably marked by the sharp divide between the country and the city.

⁹ For the Catalan memory books, we refer to the *Memòria Personal* website (<<http://www.memoriapersonal.eu/>>, accessed on 1 February 2024), which features descriptions of a wide array of these items and includes digital reproductions of several of them.

¹⁰ See also the epistolary corpus edited as part of the *P.S. Post Scriptum project, A Digital Archive of Ordinary Writing (Early Modern Portugal and Spain)*, led by Rita Marquilha (<<http://teitok.clul.ul.pt/postscriptum/>>, accessed on 1 February 2024).

Most of the writing done by the common people served a pragmatic purpose, such as testifying or teaching, and does not conform to literary standards. They are the work of ‘écrivants’, not ‘écrivains,’ to use Barthes’ useful distinction (1983, 182). This differentiation is applicable to many subaltern texts from the early modern period, characterized by a desire to ‘leave a trace’ that does not necessarily conform to the standards of the prestigious realm of literary creation (Fabre 1993, 11).

In broad terms, the written output of the subaltern classes reveals a compelling need to write that transcends the traditional frameworks used to interpret more literary activities. Its male and female authors navigate an ambiguous realm between orality and literacy, between being literate and semi-literate – that is, at the juncture where they first encounter writing and its complexities, rules, limitations, and mysteries. However, it is crucial to understand that this does not mean we should view these texts as mere transpositions of spoken language.

The characteristics of popular writing display common traits that, remarkably, tend to persist across centuries (Bartoli Langeli 2000). They reflect an inexperienced or unskilled graphic competence, marked by elements such as discontinuous letter formation, the use of generally large letter sizes, an inability to maintain regular alignment, uncertain penmanship, irregularities in text layout, and uniform lettering regardless of their position in the word. Alongside these graphic peculiarities, there are morpho-syntactic features that give the texts a continuous, uninterrupted flow reminiscent of spoken language, and lexical aspects, notably significant dialectal and colloquial interferences (Marquilhas 2000, 230-266; Castillo Gómez 2002, 26-28; De Caprio 2019). Frequently, popular practitioners perceive writing as an uncommon experience and describe it as something inappropriate and restrictive, as if they were encroaching upon a field not meant for them.

6. *Graphic Mediations and other Subaltern Writings*

When we explore the subaltern’s relation with written culture, it is essential to consider instances of graphic mediation. This phenomenon is particularly notable in the early modern period, when writing became entrenched as an instrument of governance and legal authority. In such contexts, even those unable to read and write found themselves compelled, for a myriad reasons, to engage with writing.¹¹ For instance, in September 1539, María Díaz, a laundress; Juan de Salazar, a cook; and Pedro, a barber – all employees at the Colegio Mayor de San Ildefonso in Alcalá de Henares – when required to issue receipts for their salaries, did not turn to family or acquaintances likely as illiterate as themselves. Instead, they sought out the more accessible *licenciados* and *bachilleres* (graduates) of the college (Castillo Gómez 1997, 314-319). Similarly, Maddalena Grattaroli, a widow from Bergamo who settled in Rome’s Trastevere neighborhood, operated a grocery store with her nephew’s help. To manage her accounts, she used a booklet, a common practice among merchants since the thirteenth century, where clients, suppliers, and transporters, alongside her nephew, recorded transactions with her, an illiterate woman, from 1523 to 1537 (Petrucci 1978b). Moreover, between 1512 and 1576, wet nurses employed by the Hospital of Valencia used delegated writing to draft and sign receipts for their services (Gimeno Blay 1993).

The study of the practice of ‘writing for others’, as Petrucci put it (1989), opens up a rich field of research, especially because it includes in the history of writing those who are most marginalized (Lyons 2014). Naturally, delegated writing is not always a result of illiteracy but can also stem from a lack of knowledge about the rules governing the drafting of different types

¹¹ Regarding illiteracy from 1750 onwards, see Lyons 2022, particularly the chapter on the ‘Literary culture of the illiterate’ (79-98).

of documents, especially when these are intended to have legal or administrative value. When a document requires greater familiarity with writing protocols, the search for effectiveness, as in drafting a letter of supplication or petition to the authorities, or adherence to notarial practice, this mediation fell on writing professionals: notaries endowed with public trust and scribes, often with offices in squares and public spaces.¹² Yet finding such professionals could sometimes prove challenging, as evidenced by Inés de Carvallar's difficulty in March 1574, indicated by her sister Beatriz's explanation in a letter from Mexico City: 'Inés asks for forgiveness for not writing due to the lack of a notary' (quoted Otte 1988, 85).

This scenario also highlights the textual negotiations between illiterate subalterns or those unfamiliar with the intricacies of written and legal culture, and the professionals who filled these gaps or were responsible for legally validating documents. While traditional views relegated notaries to mere representatives of power, recent research has reevaluated their role as intermediaries (Nussdorfer 2009), emphasizing their capacity to mediate on behalf of subalterns' interests (Herzog 1996; Burns 2010). Thus, notaries serve not only the powerful but are accessible to all, reflecting subalterns' petitions and suggestions to safeguard their interests (Albornoz and Argouse 2017).

As Juliet Fleming observed while studying graffiti in private English houses at the beginning of the early modern period, 'paper was not necessarily the most obvious, or suitable, medium for writing' (2001, 10). Therefore, in exploring a subaltern history of writing, it is also essential to consider what was written on walls. Whether on the ephemeral surfaces of street walls or within various buildings (churches, convents, prisons, castles, private homes, palaces), alongside the testimonies found in chronicles, biographies, and other texts, it is possible to trace the written appropriation by common writers.¹³

Many (more men than women) left their mark by inscribing their names on walls, often followed by a date; some merely recorded the passage of days with marks, especially in prisons. Among the textual graffiti, some served a notarial or chronicling function, documenting specific events; others express the author's religiosity through prayers and devotional annotations. There are also examples that testify to a mix of cultures and religions, such as those preserved in New Spanish convents; and those that used walls to express criticism or allegiance to authority, whether through the slogan 'Viva el rey' and the effigy of Philip IV drawn in the bell tower of the Church of San Salvador in Cocentaina, Alicante, or the 'fueresse oliveros' (down with Olivares!), presumably referring to the Count-Duke of Olivares, inscribed at the entrance of the Hospital de Santa Creu in Barcelona, likely during the Catalan revolt against Philip IV (1640-1659). And, of course, we must not forget that the walls also bore drawings of objects, figures, scenes, and symbols of great variety (crosses, crucifixes, representations of the Virgin and other religious figures, clothing, weapons, plans, etc.). These captured forms of popular religiosity, battles, everyday scenes; various expressions, in short, of the popular memory of the time.¹⁴

¹² Instances of delegated writing and the presence of writing professionals in public spaces have been documented in various locations across Europe and the Hispanic world. Among others, such activities were recorded at Largo do Pelourinho Velho in Lisbon (Bouza 2001, 72-73), in front of the Palace of Justice and near the cemetery of the Holy Innocents in Paris (Métayer 2000), and, within the Hispanic realm, at least around the cathedrals of Granada and Seville (in Seville, also in the Corral de los Olmos), in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento in Toledo, in front of the Church of San Salvador in Madrid, and in the main squares of Málaga and Lima (Castillo Gómez 2010, 365-369).

¹³ On Graffiti and wall writing as a major cultural phenomenon in medieval and early modern Europe, see the recent collection of essays published in the *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, vol. 9, edited by Raffaella Sarti (2020).

¹⁴ On common writers' modern graffiti, see Castillo Gómez 2023, who provides an extensive bibliography.

7. Conclusion

In 1968, Jack Goody noted that for at least two millennia, most people in the world, particularly in Eurasia and Africa, had lived in neither fully preliterate nor fully literate societies, 'but in cultures which were influenced in some degree by the circulation of the written word, by the presence of groups or individuals who could read and write. They lived on the margins of literacy, though this is a fact that many observers have tended to ignore' (4-5). Goody's observation is a useful reminder that social memory was preserved, shaped, and disputed both orally and in writing; both with 'acts of authorship' (Amelang 1998, 50) and 'insurgent literacy' (Justice 1994, 13-66) and through delegated writing; by carefully engaging with the world of the letter and by irately setting fire to paper and parchment.

Moreover, it is not always illiteracy, deprivation, and oppression that explains oblivion. Official history certainly erased the memory of riots and other acts of subaltern defiance. Similarly, in the realm of orality, we could retrace 'a systematic attempt by the authorities to sever the autonomous circuits of folk discourse and to deny ... heterodox stor[ies] any social site where [they] could be safely retold and interpreted' (Scott 1990, 126). But how much history a people wants to remember is many times a purposeful decision. 'How much history a people have, far from indicating their low stage of evolution, is always an active choice', said Scott in a different work (2009, 237). Forgetting is, paradoxically, a constitutive aspect of memory. Just as narrative requires ellipsis, the social transmission of collective memory requires selection and erasure. After a popular rebellion in early modern England, for instance, the townsfolk was divided between those who wanted to hang on to the memory of the insurrection, and even mobilize it, and those who wanted to just forget and avoid the consequences of being at all associated with it (Wood 2007). And a few decades after Castile's Comunero uprising, one opponent could claim that it was their enemies that 'wrote [about it] so that the memory of so great a blunder is not lost' (Martínez 2021, 253). Times of commotion always gave way to conflicting responses by the common people in dealing with the past, both orally and in writing (Wood 2007, 209).

In a famous passage from Plato's *Phaedrus*, the Egyptian god Theuth, 'the father of letters', came to god Thamus, king of all Egypt, to offer him writing, an 'elixir of memory.' After having considered it, Thamus rejected Theuth's gift, for he found that writing would actually have about the opposite effect, 'for this invention will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, because they will not practice their memory. Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are no part of themselves, will discourage the use of their own memory.' Interestingly, the story depicts a god-king depriving his subjects of the technology of writing, as if it were an allegory of some historical forms of exclusion effected by the unequal distribution of literacy and cultural capital. In fact, Thamus suggests that this 'elixir not of memory, but of reminding' would lead people to 'read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant' (Plato 2014, 562). Writing could be an elixir or a poison for memory. But in any case it was dangerous when improperly administered. Despite Thamus' attempt, and as we have suggested earlier, common people would in fact embark in the Promethean task of appropriating writing and using it to give shape to their own notions about the common past, to defend or dispute custom, and ultimately to write, against all odds, their own history.

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Part Two

Case Studies

Tracing Lives
Writing, Memory and Popular Autobiography



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Forged Letters Counterfeit Manumission Certificates and Subaltern Writing Practices as Used by Enslaved Individuals in Early Modern Iberia

Fernando Bouza

Complutense University of Madrid (<ortegal@ucm.es>)

Abstract

The focus of the essay is the fabrication, circulation and use of 'forged documents' by subaltern groups, and in particular, counterfeit manumission certificates created for and by enslaved individuals in Iberia during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The analysis of 'forged documents' provides a deeper insight into how official model documents were appropriated by these subaltern illiterate groups. Furthermore, it provides a testimony of the dynamics of subaltern responses to documentary norms and models along the lines discussed by Donald F. McKenzie.

Keywords: Counterfeits and Forgeries, Appropriations of Official Documents, Early Modern Iberia, Slavery, Subaltern Solidarities

1. *Introduction*

In October 1580, Leonor, a young black woman and resident of Lisbon, crossed the frontier between Portugal and Castile. As far as she was aware, she was travelling as a servant of Captain Fernán López de Avellaneda, who was returning to the court in Madrid following his tour of duty during the sack of Lisbon, which had taken place in August that same year. On reaching Alcuéscar, in the district of Montánchez in Extremadura, the young woman discovered that the soldier intended to sell her there as a slave. He declared that he had legitimately captured her during military action from the encampment of Dom António, Prior do Crato, on the outskirts of Lisbon. It was then that Leonor revealed to a local priest that she was not a slave, but in fact a freedwoman, and she showed him her *carta de horro*

(manumission certificate), the document that demonstrated that freedmen and women had been legally granted manumission (*ahorria*, *alhorria*, *ahorramiento*) by their owners.

As a result, a lengthy lawsuit began and it dragged on until 1584, during which time it was transferred to Madrid; Avellaneda declared throughout that Leonor's *carta*, or certificate, was false and had been *fabricada* (forged) to his slave's advantage. Thanks to the legal enquiries that were undertaken, it is possible to reconstruct the manumission process Leonor had undergone, and her Portuguese manumission certificate (*carta de alforria*), which had been drawn up before a public notary in Lisbon in 1574 by her past owner, María Ortiz, was cited as evidence. Leonor had subsequently gone to live 'en casa de por sí' (in a house on her own) and was not subject to anyone.

During the trial, Leonor's testimony, in which she was referred to as *Leonor morena* (dark-skinned Leonor), *Leonor negra* (black Leonor) and Leonor Ortiz, was taken down in writing. She gave an account of her life, stating that she had been a slave, was a mother of two sons, a resident of the Lisbon district where she resided near *Portas de Santa Catarina* (St Catherine's Gate), and that she worked as freedwoman washing household linen. Although she did not sign her declaration, given that she did not know how to, she participated as *autora* (author); in other words, as plaintiff in this trial. Furthermore, she had brought the document demonstrating that she was a freedwoman with her from Portugal to Castile, and this sufficed for her to be freed from the power of Captain Avellaneda following the unequivocal judicial sentence.¹

The recourse that groups from amongst the predominantly illiterate rural population made to formal legal procedures occurred on a mass scale in early modern Spain. Pegerto Saavedra has studied this issue in the greatest depth. He has shown that for the Galician peasants who tended land either as colonate tenants of ecclesiastical landowners, or else as vassals to the nobility, bringing lawsuits, involving lengthy proceedings and appeals against their ecclesiastical or civil landowners, proved to be a strategy that provided excellent results (Saavedra 1996). A number of legal memoranda submitted by Christian captives held by Muslims have also been conserved (Tarruell Pellegrin 2013). However, a less well-known phenomenon is the submission of legal memoranda by, or on behalf of, freedmen or enslaved individuals (Olsen 1998; Juvé Martín 2005; Oliveira 2005), and likewise the latter's recourse to the law courts. Slaves undoubtedly went on to pursue legal action against their owners for both detaining them illegitimately as well as for mistreating them, and also for keeping them in inappropriate conditions and not attending to their basic needs (Periáñez Gómez 2010, 402-410; see van Deusen 2015).

It is significant that we know much more about the oral (Fra Molinero 1995) as well as the phatic and musical (Rodulfo Hazen 2022) forms used by slaves than we do about the bonds they formed through writing in its most diverse forms of representation. The aim of this article is to analyse a series of legal trials involving enslaved men and women – above all, but not solely, those of African origin, Berbers and Moriscos – in Spain and Portugal during the Early Modern Age, all of whom sought to claim *su libertad* (their freedom).²

For this purpose, they all clearly stated that they had been freed, and they did so either because they were kept in a state of slavery despite having been manumitted, or because their owners accused them of presenting counterfeit *cartas de horro*. On the basis of these trials, it is

¹ *De Leonor de color morena con el capitán Fernando de Avellaneda estante en esta corte sobre su libertad*, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid (AHN), Órdenes Militares (OM), Archivo Histórico de Toledo (AHT), legajo 6084. This study has been undertaken as part of the research project PID2020-113906GB-I00, 'Las prácticas culturales de las aristocracias ibéricas del Siglo de Oro: en los orígenes del cosmopolitismo altomoderno (siglos XVI-XVII)' financed by the Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación of the Gobierno de España. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by Jeremy Roe.

² For an overview of slavery in Spain and Portugal, see Fonseca 2014; Caldeira and Feros 2020; Guillén and Salicrú i Lluç 2021; Pérez García and Fernández Chaves 2021.

possible to reconstruct accounts of both the lives of the individuals involved, and the broader collective experience of slavery. Furthermore, it is argued that the testimonies given at court provide a valuable form of egodocument.³ The accounts discussed here shed light on the sought-after ‘slaves’ view of slavery’, albeit without attaining the same scale and scope of the sources discussed in Stuart B. Schwartz’s classic study on the conditions imposed by a group of slaves on Manuel da Silva Ferreira, following their flight from the *Engenho* (sugar plantation) of Ilhéus to create a *mocambo* (community) of escaped slaves between 1789 and 1790 (1977).⁴

It goes without saying that the documentation uncovered here could be framed within the extensive spectrum of practices of writing through delegation⁵ (Petrucci 1989; Métayer 2000; Bouza 2001), bearing in mind the fact that the great majority of enslaved individuals discussed in this study, just like Leonor, were illiterate.⁶ Nevertheless, the case of Juan Rodríguez Prieto, a slave of African origin, is of special relevance as he was able to write, and was tried for having written counterfeit *cartas de libertad* for a third party, for whom he copied an authentic *carta* he had borrowed from a freedman.

2. Types of ‘carta de horro’: Manumission Granted Freely or for a Price

Drawing on the legal traditions of the *ius commune*, in both canon and civil law, as well as the law of the Iberian kingdoms and customary law practices, the principal legal means through which a slave could shrug off their menial status and gain their freedom was for their owner to manumit them by issuing a document referred to as a *donatio libertatis*.⁷ Manumission was granted either as a clause in a will, or as a decision made during the slave owner’s lifetime, and liberty could either be granted freely or for a price (Schwartz 1974; Saunders 1982, 138-140; Cortés López 1989, 141-152; González Díaz 1997; Martín Casares 2005; Vincent 2008, 58-62; Periañez Gómez 2010, 463-498; Silva Júnior 2013; Vasseur Gámez 2014). Nevertheless, when liberty was freely granted, it could be postponed in accordance with certain conditions: owners would normally stipulate that their slaves continued to serve them until they died,⁸ or else for a

³ When analysing these documents, consideration must be given to the possible mediation of legal officials. On enslaved people summoned before royal justice, see Fernández Martínez 2020 and 2021.

⁴ Schwartz analysed and published an extraordinary document: the *Tratado proposto a Manuel da Silva Ferreira pellos seus escravos durante o tempo em que se conservarão* (Treaty proposed to Manuel da Silva Ferreira by his Slaves during the time that they remained in revolt) (1977, 80-81).

⁵ It is beyond the scope of this study to analyse the practice of reading aloud to slaves. However, an insightful example is provided by the sixteenth-century testimony published by Schwartz that recounts how a mestizo, Francisco Escobar, would read chivalric romances aloud to his slaves while they undertook farming duties in Arequipa (2008, 155).

⁶ Over the course of this study one highly significant slave has been found: correspondence exchanged with Tetuán records how in 1605, a slave called Hamete was found in the possession of ‘cartas minçivas y papeles escriptas con letras aráuigas’ (letters, missives and papers inscribed with Arabic writing) (AHN, Diversos, Concejos y ciudades legajo 7, 4).

⁷ There are also documentary records for the licences that the owners issued to their slaves permitting them to be absent for brief periods, which was usually to undertake work for others. For example, in 1615 the owner of the mulatto Juan Guerrero granted him a licence of this type for a month and a half to work as a reaper along with other mulattoes, AHN, OM, AHT, legajo 69202.

⁸ These conditions were established by Francisco López de Zúñiga, Duke of Béjar in 1583 for his slave María de Montoya. Following the permission granted by the duke and duchess, she married a resident of Piedrahita, and, when he died, she remarried, this time to a resident of Huéscar. The document for the second marriage has been conserved; it states the conditions established by the duke, and it was signed by both spouses. Archivo Histórico de la Nobleza, Toledo, Osuna, C.228, D.30. The fact that María de Montoya knew how to sign her name is relevant given the dearth of evidence for enslaved individuals who were able to do so.

varying number of years; this was four years in the case of the *donatio libertatis* granted by Diego Velázquez to his slave Juan de Pareja in Rome in 1650 (Vincent-Cassy and Vincent 2021).⁹

As was discussed by a number of treatise writers of the period, such as Juan Machado de Chaves (1594-1653), who wrote in Quito, there was also the possibility of a slave being granted freedom if it could be proven that their owner did not feed them or made their life unbearable. In his *Perfeto confessor*, Machado de Chaves declared that ‘quando el señor niega los alimentos a su esclavo i le dexa por perdido o le desampara quando está enfermo, que en tal caso quede también libre’¹⁰ (1641, 703).

In 1675, Esperanza de los Reyes, a slave from Cape Verde, declared before the authorities that her new owner, the merchant Juan Francisco Fiesco, did not attend to her most basic needs with regard to shoes and clothing, and he mistreated her in deed and word, calling her rude names like *perra* (bitch); by taking this step, Esperanza sought to be granted her freedom, or else sold on to a new owner. She recorded that, thanks to other slaves from Cape Verde, who also lived at the court, she was just about able to support herself; they fed her and provided her with clothes, as well as conversation.¹¹

But it was more common that freedom should be granted by owners following a financial donation or a payment, in what was referred to as redemption in return *por dineros* (for money). Whatever option was pursued, it was essential that the terms of the manumission be formally agreed before a public notary. Therefore, the printed compilations of Castilian model public documents used by notaries include examples of manumission certificates for slaves. For example, what is referred to as the *Suma de notas de [Hernando Díaz de] Valdepeñas* contains both the *carta de horro [de gracia]* ([freely granted] manumission certificate) and the *carta de horro por maravedís* (certificate for manumission paid in maravedis) (Díaz de Valdepeñas 1538, xxiiiir). As in the case of Leonor, the aforementioned slave from Lisbon, the huge majority of these manumission certificates were written on paper, although there are examples of them being written on parchment, such as the one that Doña Gracia Olazábal, widow of the royal secretary, Alonso de Idiáquez, granted in San Sebastián in 1555 to Lorenzo, a slave from Tunez, who was about fifty at the time.¹²

Both models merit closer scrutiny, first of all the *carta de horro de gracia* in the form in which it was widely disseminated for practical use by the notaries of the period. This is the model provided by Francisco González de Torneo

*Carta de horro, de gracia.
Requiere ocho cláusulas.
Primera relación.*

⁹ This fascinating article casts doubts upon the ethnic status of the renowned painter, Pareja, who might not have been a mulatto, but instead a Berber or Morisco slave (Vincent-Cassy and Vincent 2021, 118).

¹⁰ (when an owner denies his slave food and abandons them, or does not assist them when ill, then in such cases they [the slave] are also considered free).

¹¹ *Pleito de libertad entre Esperanza de los Reyes, esclava negra, y Juan Manuel Otañel, difunto, su presunto amo, y con Juan Francisco Fiesco, yerno del anterior y su heredero, por malos tratamientos*, AHN, Consejos suprimidos [CCSS], legajo 27713.

¹² Archivo Histórico Provincial de Zaragoza, Zaragoza, Sala IV, 86-14, <<https://dara.aragon.es/>>, accessed on 1 February 2024. Another example, dated 1559, was issued to Alonso Moreno, originally from Manicongo. It is conserved in the Archivo de la Real Chancillería de Valladolid (ARCV) – Pergaminos, carpeta, 96, 25 – although in this case it is a transcription from an original that had been written on paper. (<<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusqueda20/catalogo/description/541256?nm>>, accessed on 1 February 2024).

[1] Sépase por esta escritura, que yo fulano Domineo vezino, tengo por mi esclauo afulano, color tal, y de edad, y señas: y porque me ha seruido muy bien, y tengo entendido que tiene muy buenas costumbres, y es buen Christiano, es mi voluntad de darle libertad.

[2] Que le doy y dono de gracia la dicha libertad, por la mejor vía y forma que de derecho ha lugar.

[3] Y le cedo y renuncio, y traspasso todo el derecho que sobre él tengo, ansi del vso y seruicio dél y de los bienes que adquiriere, como en otra manera.

[4] Para que desde oy en adelante pueda hazer y disponer de sí, y de los bienes que adquiriere, lo que quisiere, y hazer escripturas y contractos, y lo demás que persona libre.

[5] Y prometo de auer por firme esta escriptura. E para ello obligo mi persona y bienes muebles y rayzes, &c.

Las 6, 7 y 8 En el poder a las justicias. Y doy poder a las justicias, &c.¹³ (1591, 227r-v)

Likewise, the model document for the *carta de horro por dineros* (certificate for paid manumission) consisted of the following:

Carta de horro por dineros.
Requiere ocho cláusulas.

[1] Sépase por esta carta, que yo fulano Alberio tengo por esclauo a fulano, color tal, de tal edad, y por causas que a ello me mueuen le he permitido libertarse, dándome tanta quantía.

Ha de hauer el dueño veinte años para darle libertad en escriptura y por testamento ...

[2] El qual me la da y paga ante el presente escriuano, en tal moneda.

Y si le ha hecho escriptura por ellos dirá. Por cuánto me tiene hecha escriptura de me las pagar por ante fulano escriuano ...

[3] Y desde aora, le cedo, y renuncio, y traspasso, el derecho que tenía, de tenerle sujeto y seruirme, y vsar, y disponer dél, y a los bienes que ganasse y adquiriesse, y otro qualquier que sobre él me pertenece.

[4] Para que desde oy en adelante pueda hazer y disponer de sí, y de los bienes que adquiriere lo que quisiere y hazer escripturas y contractos y lo demás que persona libre.

[5] E prometo de auer por firme esta escriptura.

Las 6, 7 y 8 En el poder a las justicias. Y doy poder a las justicias.¹⁴ (226v-227r)

¹³ (Certificate for freely granted manumission. Requires eight clauses. First clause [1] Let it be known by this certificate, that I, John Doe, resident, have Richard Roe as my slave, of such and such colour and such and such age, and because he has served me very well, and it is my understanding that he upholds good customs, and is a good Christian, it is my wish to grant him his freedom. [2] That I freely give him and grant him the aforesaid freedom through the best means and form that the law provides for. [3] And I cede and renounce to him and hand over all the rights I exercise over him, as well as the use and service I derive from him, and of the property that he may acquire, and any other aspect. [4] So that from today and hereafter he can act and provide for himself, and [use] the property that he acquires as he wishes. [5] And I promise to firmly honour this document. And I thereby commit my person and movable goods and immovable goods, etc. Clauses 6, 7 and 8 through the power of the justices. And I grant power to the justices, etc.)

¹⁴ (Certificate for paid manumission. Requires eight clauses. First clause[1] Let it be known by this certificate, that I Thomas Rowe, resident, have Richard Fen as my slave, of such and such colour and such and such age, and for reasons that move me to do so, I have permitted him to manumit himself by giving me such and such a sum. {The owner must be twenty years old or more in order to grant freedom in writing and through a will} [...] [2] The aforesaid sum must be presented and paid to me before this notary in such and such coinage. And if a document is drawn up by them, it will read: For how much the document stipulates he must pay me, before John Den, notary [...] [3] And henceforth I cede and renounce to him, and hand over all the right I exercise over him, as well as the use and service I derive from him and of the property that he may acquire, and any other matter of his that belongs to me. [4] Whereby the property that he earns and acquires is his and he can act and use himself and his property, as well as draw up contracts and documents, as he wishes and all other matters like a free person.t [5] And I promise to firmly honour this document, for which I oblige my person and property, etc. Clauses 6, 7 and 8 in the power of the justices. And I grant power to the justices, etc.). Translator's note: in these legal texts the translation of fulano as John Doe and its variant forms is

It is hard to establish the sums individuals paid for their freedom, but Saunders states that the amount 'seems to have been equivalent to the market price of a slave', to which must be added the other expenses involved in issuing the certificate, all of which would be paid by the manumitted individuals (1982, 138), and this would be more expensive for women than for men (Franco Silva 2000, 53). For example, in 1552, Margarida had to pay 10,000 *reis* in order to obtain her *carta de alforria* in the Portuguese city of Porto (Saunders 1982, 138). The following year in Mérida, Juana Muñoz declared before the justice that despite having paid 60 ducats for the manumission of her husband Cosme de Vargas, Rodrigo de Mendoza had then gone to sell him to a new owner.¹⁵

Fleeing from their owners was, obviously, a common choice, but it was beset by dangers. Before doing so, efforts would be made to counter the hypothetical principal legal foundation for slavery: either being a child of slaves or having been taken captive in a just war.

Some enslaved individuals, as well as those at risk of being sold into slavery, invoked such arguments when issuing memoranda to the king as a means of gaining his support. For example, a Japanese man, Francisco Xavier, applied for a passport in 1693 in order to undertake a pilgrimage to Jerusalem; although he was a freeman, he was thought to be a slave due to his dark skin colour.¹⁶ Some years before, Diogo Fernandes de Mendonça, who was from Goa and had arrived in Spain as a soldier, took his complaints to the *Conselho de Portugal* and sought its protection from a person whose servant he claimed to be, but who in turn said that Diogo was his slave.¹⁷ Others went on to initiate proceedings against their owners and demand their freedom. These types of trials were known as the *causa liberalis* or manumission lawsuits (Bermúdez de Pedraza 1633, 209).

One example of one of these cases is the lawsuit brought against the powerful brothers Simón Ruiz (1525-1597) and Vítores Ruiz from Medina del Campo by João and Catarina Santo Tomé, who were acknowledged as freedman and woman by the Castilian royal justice officials in 1559. They were both Africans 'nascidos en ciertas islas de Portugal',¹⁸ perhaps São Tomé and Príncipe; although they had travelled to France they were sent from Nantes to Castile by Andrés Ruiz, a brother of the merchants from Medina del Campo.¹⁹ A second example took place in the viceroyalty of Peru, where Gaspar de Acosta brought a lawsuit against his master, Bernardo Vanegas de Vegara, with regard 'dezir que el susodicho es persona libre y no esclavo'.²⁰ Acosta declared himself to be an indio (Indian, from the Portuguese *Estado da Índia*), although in light of the information provided by the jurist Francisco Carrasco del Saz (†1625), he must have in fact been a Malay from the Islamic sultanate of Patani, where the Portuguese had maintained a presence since the early sixteenth century. The freedom of the supposed slave had to be reinstated because, he stated, the inhabitants of this enclave on the trade route from Malacca to China were 'sujetos al Governador de Goa y como tales personas libres tratan y contratan'²¹ (Carrasco del Saz n.d.).

based, firstly, on the OED definition of John Doe as 'An anonymous (male) party in a legal action' and, secondly, the early modern examples cited in the OED Historical Thesaurus. Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. 'John Doe, n., sense 2', July 2023, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9560029818>>, accessed on 1 February 2024.

¹⁵ AHN, OM, AHT, legajo 20414. A receipt for the first manumission payment (540 *reales*) paid by Bárbola de Zambrano for the freedom of her husband, who was a slave in Antequera, in 1650 has been conserved, AHN, Diversos, Concejos y ciudades, legajo 7, 17. On the price variations for paid manumission, see Morgado García 2010, 408-410.

¹⁶ AHN, CCSS, legajo 7205.

¹⁷ AHN, CCSS, legajo 4422.

¹⁸ (who had been born in certain islands belonging to Portugal).

¹⁹ ARCV, Registro de ejecutorias, caja 938, 37; sendos pleitos en ARCV, Pleitos civiles, Fernando Alonso, caja 1399-9; y 1046-6.

²⁰ (to his saying that the aforementioned is a free person and not a slave).

²¹ (under the authority of the Governor of Goa and as such free people, who can trade and draw up contracts).

Acosta thereby sought to demonstrate that he could not have been reduced to slavery. A Turkish man, Azayn, sought the same end when defending his lawsuit by stating that he was Greek Orthodox and called Jorge Teodoro. His testimony was corroborated by other Eastern Christians, who were summoned as witnesses (de la Escalera Guevara 1654). Likewise, one Antonio declared that he was from the *nación de las Yndias* (nation of the Indies) because he had been born in the land of Prester John, and he took out a lawsuit in Mérida in 1553, against one Lope Bote, who claimed to be his master.

Antonio claimed his freedom because he was from the nation of Christians, and thereby could not have been legitimately enslaved. However, he had greater difficulty explaining the marks on his face, which seemingly identified him as a slave; the latter would be branded on their faces by their owners. Having lost his lawsuit in the lower courts of justice in Mérida, Antonio took his appeal to the *Consejo de Órdenes*, and his case was transferred to Valladolid. There, in 1554, he managed to be declared an *ombre libre* (free man), on the basis of the testimonies of three men from his homeland, who declared that Antonio was indeed a Christian Ethiopian (*caldeo* [Chaldean]) and that the marks on his head were due to the ritual baptism by fire that was customary amongst this Christian community.²²

Scarcely ten years later, in 1546, and relatively close by, in Jerez de los Caballeros, a trial began concerning a man aged 38, who had returned to the city twenty years after having left it. He was called Francisco Gómez Rasquidillo, and had worked as a weaver in various places – Toledo, Granada, Zaragoza, Seville, Valencia. He claimed to be the son of a local resident called Diego Gómez Rasquido but did not know who his mother was. As his skin was dark in colour, the heirs of one Juan Maraver claimed that he was the mulatto Francisquillo, who had been born to a slave called Elena and the aforementioned Diego Gómez. Nobody knew the whereabouts of the latter and it was feared he had fled. In this case, Rasquido claimed that ‘nunca se a visto cautivo’²³ in order to counter the claim that he was the mulatto, Francisquillo, which was based on the striking similarity between them ‘en gestos e color e habla’.²⁴ The solution was to identify his mother, who had given birth to him as a widow, and his unmarried father, as well as insisting that in that region ‘muchas mugeres libre son morenas y nacen dellas hijos morenos’.²⁵

3. *Fugitive Slaves with Counterfeit Manumission Certificates*

In the event they managed to flee their owners, some fugitive slaves sought to change their name²⁶ and they also procured counterfeit manumission certificates. This is what led to the dark-skinned Juan de Orán being sent back to prison having previously escaped from a prison in Burgos in 1557.²⁷ Francisco de Guzmán, who had been born in Turkey, met the same fate and

²² *Antonio indio esclavo de Lope Bote en la cárcel de Mérida, 1553*, AHN, OM, AHT, legajo 49896. Concerning the mark of the baptism rite: ‘traen comúnmente todos en la frente una Cruz de oro, que les imprimen en el Baptismo’ (they all usually have a gold Cross, which is marked upon them at Baptism) (de Sandoval 1627, 98v); or ‘tres puntos y señales en la frente, entre las cejas, sobre la nariz’ (three dots and marks on the forehead, between the eyebrows, above the nose) (de Urreta 1610, 483).

²³ (he had never been a captive).

²⁴ (in gestures, colour and speech).

²⁵ (many free women are dark-skinned and give birth to dark-skinned children). *El bachiller Juan Maraver y María de Hormaza, vecinos de Jerez [de los Caballeros] contra Francisco, mulato*. AHN, OM, AHT, legajo 54469.

²⁶ It was not uncommon for people to change their names in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but in this case, there was an aggravating circumstance as his name was changed for criminal intent or else illicitly, just as is found in the case recorded by de la Escalera Guevara 1653. See Groebner 2007.

²⁷ ARCV, Registro de ejecutorias, caja 903, 30.

was sent to prison in Pamplona in 1624. The case of the latter white slave provides key insights into a number of aspects of the strategies used by those who forged manumission certificates.

The accounts of Francisco de Guzmán's life blur reality and fiction in an almost literary manner. According to his declaration he had lived in Santa Maura – the island of Aya Mavra, today Lefkada – where he had been taken captive when galleys from Naples and Sicily had landed there. Having passed through the hands of a series of owners, he had been brought to Andalusia as the property of Juan de Zabaleta, from whom he had been bought by Diego de Guzmán, canon of the Cathedral of Seville. The cleric had apparently decided to free him as '*averse christianado en mi cassa*'²⁸ and he apparently did so in 1616, albeit having first received 120 ducats from the man who had been his slave, and who had paid the sum *de contado* (in cash).²⁹

Nevertheless, when the Sevillian canon discovered that he was in prison in Pamplona he issued a complaint stating that he had never granted the *carta de horro* and that Francisco de Guzmán continued to be his slave, and that he had sent him to Madrid with some horses. To demonstrate this, the canon presented the sales contract for his purchase of Francisco as a slave; however, this did not state 1616, but instead 1623, and it made no reference to him having been bought from Juan de Zabaleta, but rather a cleric called Juan Fernández del Corral. Furthermore, it was not true that Francisco had been baptized in the house of Canon Guzmán, which had been cited as an especially opportune occasion for his manumission; in fact, he was already a Christian when he had been purchased and had been baptized Francisco. Nevertheless, the definitive proof he had fled from his master was a letter written to the Sevillian canon by the slave while imprisoned in Pamplona.

In this letter, Francisco acknowledged that he had arrived in Madrid with the horses just as he had been instructed to by Diego de Guzmán. However, while at the court he became ensnared in '*vna gran pesadumbre con ciertos moços sobre una mujer*',³⁰ and they threatened to kill him. Faced with such threats he decided to leave Madrid '*sin lizençia de v.m.*',³¹ and he ended up in Pamplona, where he had been put in prison and was currently '*medio tullido y casi ynpusibilitado de poder servir ni trauajar*'.³² Hence, he wrote to his master begging him for his freedom, or else to be donated to a convent or hospital in Pamplona so that they could cure him, and he would then serve them for the rest of his life; he also stated that this is what other slaveowners had done with fugitive slaves.³³

Accusations made concerning counterfeit manumission certificates did not always result in sentences ruling against the party involved, and on occasions the veracity of the documents certifying their freedom was reaffirmed, even when the individuals concerned were in prison. This was the case for a slave called Hamete, who had been born in Oranesado and had taken the name Julián de los Reyes when he was baptized in Cuenca in 1627, only to be imprisoned in Pamplona a few months later. He had originally been taken captive on the Mediterranean coast of Almería, but eventually ended up in the Andalusian *villa* of Montilla in the possession of the Marquis of Priego, Alonso Fernández de Córdoba (1588-1645), who then handed him over to Juan Rubio,

²⁸ (he had been converted to Christianity in my house).

²⁹ Archivo Real y General de Navarra, Pamplona [AGN], Corte Mayor de Navarra. Procesos judiciales. Antoñana-Pendientes. ES/NA/AGN/F146/122289.

³⁰ (a serious dispute over a woman with various young men).

³¹ (without your grace's permission).

³² (half crippled and barely able to serve or work).

³³ The letter is signed '*esclauo de v.m. francisco de guzmán*' (slave of his grace, Francisco de Guzmán), Pamplona, 15 August 1624. It opens with a reference to two other letters written to his master, but these are not included in the trial proceedings.

who served as steward to the marquis. Through a public document issued in June 1626, Rubio, the last of Hamete's owners, manumitted him in return for 'los buenos seruiçios que me a echo'³⁴ as well as the fulfilment of a more practical side to the agreement: Hamete had also paid him one thousand *reales*, the same sum that Rubio had paid the Marquis of Montilla when buying him as a slave some years before.³⁵ Needless to say, in Pamplona he was interrogated about how he had managed to obtain the *reales* he paid in return for his freedom, Hamete/Julián de los Reyes declared that during eight years he had served as a mule driver, always with permission from *su dueño* (his owner).

The case of Hamete/Julián de los Reyes highlights the difficulties faced by freedmen and women in trying to undertake new forms of employment as manumitted individuals, especially in the frontier regions of Navarra, a route typically taken by people heading for France. Concerning his *modus vivendi*, he answered the public prosecutor's interrogation by stating that he had arrived in Pamplona in search of a place where he could practise his profession as a weaver of esparto and *curar* (healer) of horses; concerning his movements after redeeming his freedom, he declared he had been in Cuenca and Zaragoza, from where he travelled to Pamplona, but due to a shortage of work he was heading for France. Furthermore, his status as a convert from Islam aroused suspicion concerning the veracity of his conversion to Christianity. To put a stop to the suspicions, Hamete carried with him documents certifying that he had been baptized, having passed the instruction provided to catechumens in the city of Cuenca.³⁶

As was mentioned above, *cartas de horro* had to be issued as an instrument of *fe pública*, or, in other words, a recognized legal document, which meant that, should an escaped slave wish to forge a manumission certificate, this required the involvement of a notary to produce a counterfeit document, and these notaries would have had to be paid a sum of money in advance. In this case, the aim of delegating the writing to a third party was to obtain a counterfeit document.

For example, in 1583, Juan, a dark-skinned black slave, fled to nearby Portugal from his owner, who was called Juan de Escalona and was a resident of Bienvenida; before escaping, Juan had stolen no less than 96 ducats from his master. When the slave, Juan, was located by his master in Aldeia Galega, on the outskirts of Lisbon, and brought back to Castile, an interesting trial was initiated that sought to identify who had produced the counterfeit document he carried. On the basis of Juan's testimony, it was concluded that the *carta de horro*, although counterfeit, had been written by a genuine notary, Alonso de Rueda, who worked in the nearby town of Puebla de Sancho Pérez. He had received 35 ducats for producing the forged document. The notary had drawn up a *carta de horro* in which the names of the master and slave had been changed as well as the location, and likewise the notary's name and his signature or rubric. Consequently, Juan went on to call himself Cristóbal Sánchez, while Juan de Escalona was converted into Juan Sánchez, and the certificate was drawn up before Juan Blas, who was in fact the notary of the *villa* of Usagre.

Rueda's intention was, obviously, to conceal any traces of the forgery process, which was also the aim sought by Juan: he declared that the *carta de horro* had been written by a soldier he had met during his journey. Having undertaken a series of legal enquiries, including the testimony given by the true notary of Usagre, who was confronted with the counterfeit document, the conclusion was eventually drawn that Alonso de Rueda had only written one part of the *carta de horro*, and entrusted the rest to his son Francisco Galindo.³⁷

³⁴ (the good service he has done for me).

³⁵ One ducat was the equivalent of eleven Castilian *reales*.

³⁶ AGN, Consejo Real de Navarra, Procesos judiciales. Mendivil-Pendientes. ES/NA/AGN/F017/058451.

³⁷ *Carta de horro falsa de Juan, esclavo de Juan de Escalona*, AHN AHT, legajo 19893.

4. Juan Rodríguez Prieto, the Slave Counterfeiter: Histories of Solidarity

In 1559, in Jerez de los Caballeros a trial took place that pitted Arias Malaver Montoya and María Sánchez, *la baja* (the little one), against a black man called Juan Rodríguez Prieto. The latter was accused of having assisted a second black slave named Francisco, who belonged to the plaintiffs, to escape from them.³⁸ To assist Francisco, Juan had given him a ‘carta de alhorría falsa escrita de su letra’,³⁹ which he claimed he had been given by the public notary, Isidro Suárez. Effectively, with the aforesaid certificate Francisco had fled Jerez de los Caballeros ‘para se librar y adquirir Libertad’,⁴⁰ and he travelled as far as Cartaya, on the Atlantic coast of Andalusia, where he was captured and returned to his owners in Extremadura. The opening of this legal investigation led to Juan Rodríguez Prieto being put in prison and a series of enquiries were undertaken to identify whether the counterfeit certificate was ‘de letra del dicho Juan’.⁴¹

The witnesses included Francisco himself, who declared that having told Juan that he wanted to head for the ‘adelante’⁴² kingdom of Portugal, the latter offered to obtain a *carta de horro* for him in exchange for some ‘calçones colorados’.⁴³ He went on to recount how for this purpose they went together to the nearby *villa* of La Higuera, where Juan Rodríguez bought ‘dos pliegos de papel’⁴⁴ upon which he wrote the certificate in the name of the slave in question. Later on, a student, who Francisco showed the certificate to, told him that ‘no era Buena’⁴⁵ and, as a result Juan had to write another one for Francisco. For this new document, they made recourse to a ‘moço loro’,⁴⁶ who worked in Fregenal, and he lent them his own *carta de horro*, so they could make a copy of it.

When Francisco was returned to Jerez from Cartaya, he still carried the counterfeit certificate, and it was presented during the trial. According to the trial proceedings, it began:

Sepan quantos esta carta de alhorría vieren como yo Arias Malaver vecino que soy desta çibdad de Xerez [de los Caballeros] de my propria y agradable voluntad e servicio a dios nuestro señor [...] por el mucho amor que le tengo a mi esclavo Francisco de color bazco [id est bazo, amulatado] y de buena estatura y de hedad de veynte años poco más o menos e porque le he criado otorgo e conozco por esta presente carta que ahorro de todo cautiverio e sujeción al dicho Francisco mi siervo con tal declaración y condición que me sirva por todos los días de mi vida ...⁴⁷

Thus, this was a *carta de horro de gracia*, albeit with the condition that the slave, who had been conveniently identified, would serve his master until his death, and the document was authorized by the notary Isidro Suárez on 19 April 1557, and had been signed by two witnesses. This coun-

³⁸ AHN, OM, AHT, legajo 18216.

³⁹ (counterfeit manumission certificate written in his own hand).

⁴⁰ (in order to escape and gain his freedom).

⁴¹ (in the handwriting of the aforesaid Juan).

⁴² (yonder).

⁴³ (coloured breeches).

⁴⁴ (two sheets of paper).

⁴⁵ (it was no good).

⁴⁶ (dark-skinned mulatto servant). On the racial category *loro*, see Fernández Chaves 2016.

⁴⁷ (May all those who see this manumission certificate know that I, Arias Malaver, resident of this city of Jerez [de los Caballeros] on my own and free volition, and in order to serve God our Lord ... Given the great love I hold for my slave Francisco, of *bazco* [*id est bazo*, mulatto] skin colour and good stature and aged twenty more or less, and because I brought him up I hereby grant and acknowledge through this here certificate that I release him, the aforesaid Francisco my servant, from all captivity and subjugation with the declaration and condition that he serves me for all the days of my life ...).

terfeit certificate was shown to a number of neighbours in Jerez de los Caballeros, who testified that Juan was its author either because ‘le he visto escribir’,⁴⁸ or ‘le ha visto escribir muchas veces.’⁴⁹

The definitive proof that Juan Rodríguez was the forger came when they ordered that he – Juan, aged 19, a slave belonging to Benito Sánchez – should write his confession in his own handwriting, as he indeed went on to do. Having denied any connection with the counterfeit *cartas de horro*, the slave was placed upon the rack, following which he confessed ‘*ques verdad quéel hizo una escritura al dicho francisco e se la trasladó e se la signó y escribió e firmó.*’⁵⁰ The trial ended with him being sentenced to receive 200 lashes and the amputation of his right hand, so the slave ‘notary’ would never be able to write again; a similar punishment was imposed on public notaries convicted of forging documents (de la Pradilla Barnuevo 1621, 16r).

The trial reveals interesting forms of sociability between enslaved individuals beyond the milieu of the better-known black confraternities (Apodaca Valdez 2022). In this regard it should be noted that there was a degree of friendship between Juan and Francisco, although they were by no means close, and likewise there was the freedman of Fregenal – about whom nothing further is known except that he was called Juan – who agreed to lend them his *carta de horro*, so they could use it as a model for forging one for the slave Francisco.

In this regard, historians have drawn attention to a range of petitions made to the *Cortes* of Castile that demonstrate a wider concern over counterfeit *cartas de horro*. During the *Cortes* held in Madrid in 1551, demands were made that the Crown should pay close attention to manumission certificates, and the fact that freedmen and women who ‘en siendo libres procuran de hacer malos a todos los esclavos, acogiéndolos en sus casas y, lo que peor es, les dan sus cartas de horro, e así se hazen muchos fugitivos e llevan sus cartas de horro falsas’⁵¹ (Cortés López 1989, 152, n. 68). The complaints continued and the proceedings of the *Cortes* held in Madrid in 1570 included the same complaint because ‘*muchos esclavos fugitivos hazen falsas cartas de horro y libertad, o las compran de esclavos muertos o las toman prestadas*’⁵² (122, n. 27). As W.D. Phillips Jr. summarized this issue as follows: ‘Often slaves used false documents of manumission, which had their own black market’ (2009, 35; Graullera Sanz 1978, 158; Martín Casares 2000, 436; Periañez Gómez 2010, 475, n. 1546).

At this point it is worth recalling how the aforementioned case of Esperanza de los Reyes from Cape Verde was assisted by other Africans from the same archipelago in Madrid during the reign of Charles II. An unequivocal reference was also made to the interpersonal bonds that were established between enslaved individuals in the testimony given by Jerónima de San Miguel with regard to the Berber woman Catalina de los Mártires, widow of the African man Francisco de la Peña; the former declared in court that ‘*las dos eran compañeras como criadas y esclavas*’.⁵³

However, the most fascinating case in which slaves or freed slaves gave testimony during legal enquiries and demonstrated both their ‘provenance’ and territorial solidarity is found amongst the testimonies gathered in Cadiz on the orders of Governor Francisco Gutiérrez de los Ríos

⁴⁸ (I have seen him write).

⁴⁹ (I have often seen him write).

⁵⁰ (that it is true that he drew up a document for the aforesaid Francisco and he transcribed it and he placed a seal upon it and wrote and signed and added his rubric to it).

⁵¹ (having gained their freedom, seek to lead other slaves into perdition, by giving them lodging in their houses and what is even worse, giving them their *cartas de horro*, and thereby creating numerous fugitives who carry forged *cartas de horro*).

⁵² (many fugitive slaves make forged *cartas de horro y libertad*, either buying those of dead slaves or else borrowing them).

⁵³ (the two had been companions as servants and slaves). She gave his testimony during the trial held in 1661, during which the heirs of Doctor Alonso Garzón claimed as their property Catalina, who had once been the physician’s slave and who he had manumitted, AHN, CCSS, legajo 30390.

(1644-1721), Count of Fernán Núñez, concerning the origin of Oquere Osinu [Francisco Rey de Mina]. It was said he was a son of the Fante king in what is today Ghana (Vincent 2020). The African prince had been taken captive during a war against his father's kingdom and sold as booty to some Danish sailors, who had taken him on board their ship at Kormantsi, or Fort Amsterdam, and then brought him to Cadiz in 1688. It was there that he was bought by the count aboard the same ship. The aforementioned documentation, which was drawn up in 1689, included the testimonies of five Africans, of whom only one could sign their name.

The first of these was Juan Francisco Bazán, sergeant major of the garrison of black soldiers in Cadiz, who declared that he had known Oquere in the Fante kingdom and that he was even a relative of his; they were both sons of mutual cousins. With regard to himself, he stated that he was fifty years old, he did not know how to sign his name, and that he had been brought by some Englishmen to Cadiz, where he is 'la persona de más inteligencia de dichos negros por entender más bien la lengua y respecto que le tienen'.⁵⁴ In addition to him, testimony was given by Captain Francisco Manuel Rufo, aged 48, who was born in – he said not without displeasure – the place that in Spain is referred to as Mina, but over there is referred to as Fante; he initialled his declaration as he did know how to sign his name. The third man to give a statement was called Francisco Tomás. He had been taken captive by the English thirteen years earlier and had spent five years in England, from where he made his way to Spain and had been baptized. The final testimonies were given by two young men called Diego Francisco and Miguel Blas. They had been forced to leave their homeland like Oquere Osinu, and had been brought by the Danish sailors to Cadiz in the same ship.

Alfonso Franco Silva has underscored the forms of solidarity that can be detected in early sixteenth-century Seville, as is illustrated by the black freedwoman Guiomar Fernández. In her will dated 1525, she declared that she belonged to a network of freed slaves who sought to help and free other slaves (1979, 246, n. 192). Indeed, Guiomar lived with other Africans, including a Portuguese man, Juan and his wife Catalina, as well as two black women, Violante and Magdalena (263, n. 270). With regard to the Morisco community, the same author makes reference to a report of a group of Morisco freedmen who collected money in order to free slaves from amongst the Muslim converts to Christianity (245).

5. Conclusions

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for enslaved and freedmen and women living in the Iberian region it was unusual, although still possible, to obtain direct access to writing. The examples of María de Montoya (1583), Francisco de Guzmán (1623), Francisco Manuel Rufo (1689) and, above all, that of Juan Rodríguez Prieto (1559) demonstrate this to be the case. Consideration should also be given to the far greater frequency of contact with writing in the form of mediations, such as sacramental documents (baptism, marriage, wills), the manumission certificates known as *cartas de horro* and *cartas de alforría*, and the sale contracts, through which they were cruelly treated as merchandise. Special scrutiny should be devoted to their access, which was common in the early modern culture of litigation, to procedures and information related to legal justice.

Although the diverse uses of writing with regard to slavery – from letters and talismans to signs tattooed on faces as indelible marks of their status – should not be overlooked, manumission documents are of particular relevance as they reveal individuals' recurrent quest to

⁵⁴ (the most intelligent person amongst the aforesaid blacks, as he has the best understanding of their language and due to his compatriots' respect for him).

escape the onerous condition of slavery. One outcome of this quest was a slave's decision to flee from their owners with the aid of a forged *carta de horro*: either by bribing public notaries, or by making recourse to other slaves or freedmen and women who helped them by providing resources to forge documents certifying their freedom.

The written testimony of Juan Rodríguez Prieto, who was born to African parents and a slave who engaged in forgery, is especially insightful, as there can be no doubt about his acquaintance with writing. The neighbours declared in their testimonies that they had seen him write on numerous occasions, and he was also required to submit his statement in writing, which facilitated a key phase of the legal investigation: the counterfeit *carta de horro* went on to be compared to his handwriting.

It may be concluded that writing was used to exercise authority over slaves, but on occasions it provided a tool to retaliate against that same authority. Parallels may be drawn to the process through which colonial communities with oral traditions rapidly adapted to literacy, as is explored in the landmark study by Donald F. McKenzie (1985).

Furthermore, it is underscored how the subaltern groups' recurring contact with forms of writing provides a means of reconstructing the lives and forms of solidarity that existed between slaves of the same origin, as is demonstrated by the cases of Esperanza de los Reyes (1675) and Oquere Osinu (1689), who were from Cape Verde and Fante (Ghana), respectively. Attaining the status of freedman or woman did not preclude individuals from maintaining ties with the community of those who continued to be slaves, as was the case for the Sevillian freedmen who sought to obtain freedom for enslaved Muslim converts to Christianity from Hornachos (1504), and likewise the case of Guiomar Fernández, who also lived in Seville (1525).

Nevertheless, in addition to this written memory, recourse was also made to the written effacement of memory through the legal system. In 1685, Diego Pedro de Rojas, who worked as a coach driver in Seville, requested that the reference to him being a slave on his *fe de bautismo* (baptism certificate) should be effaced, so he could be declared a freedman (de Velasco 1685). Thereby, he endeavoured to escape the sign of infamy imposed by writing, which was a form of control, yet also a means of resistance for such a singular subaltern group: the enslaved men and women of the Early Modern Era.

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The *Discursos de la Vida* in Inquisitorial Documentation Autobiography Between Orality and Memory*

José Luis Loriente Torres
Independent Scholar (<loriente@gmail.com>)

Abstract

In 1561 the General Inquisitor Fernando Valdés established a set of new instructions that systematically required defendants to depose their so-called *discurso de la vida* during their initial interrogation. Under the expression *discurso de la vida*, which was not exclusive to an Inquisitorial context, they were compelled to give an account of their own lives. This involved narrating a life story orally, which was then transcribed by scribes. While the defendants were rooted in a predominantly ‘oral culture’, clearly observable in their depositions, the scribes worked within a ‘written culture’ typical of their position in a social, legal and cultural system imposed from the top down. Thus, one confronts a singular source that has ‘fossilized’ thousands of interactions between both cultural models. The *discurso de la vida* was the most open-ended part of the interrogation, offering the accused the possibility of deploying a series of strategies based on their juridical and doctrinal knowledge, rhetorical skills of persuasion and ‘selective memory’. These demonstrate quite an unexpected degree of agency in such a coercive situation. According to symbolic interactionism, the best way to deal with this ‘collaborative life writing’ is to try to identify the role played by each participant in its composition. How did this interaction take place? To what extent is it possible to recover the ‘voices’ of narrators? How did the scribes or the inquisitors – both coercers and editors of these texts – bias these stories? What strategies did the protagonists deploy in their ‘performances’? These are some of the questions addressed in the article.

Keywords: Early Modern Autobiographies, Egodocuments, Life Narratives, Life Stories, Spanish Inquisition

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1. *Introduction*

This study deals with a kind of autobiography from a time when autobiography did not yet exist and whose protagonists never wished to write. It centers on the life stories of people persecuted as heretics, stated orally in response to a direct order from their inquisitors and written down by the scribes who attended the interrogation. These life stories have been referred to as ‘inquisitorial autobiography’ (Kagan and Dyer 2004), or ‘trazas’ (outlines) (Amelang 2011), and, with the exception of these two studies, this historical source has not received much attention from an autobiographical point of view. In procedural documentation they can be found under the name *discursos de la vida* (García 1591, 10r-10v), especially beginning in 1561 when the General Inquisitor Fernando Valdés established a set of new instructions that systematically required defendants to depose an oral account of their own lives during their initial interrogation (Valdés 1561, 29r). However, some sort of life narrative can be found among the papers of the Spanish Inquisition ever since its foundation by the Catholic monarchs in 1478, and the presence of these narratives seems to be related to the sacrament of confession.

This documentation is invaluable. First, because it gives us access to the ‘voices’ of hundreds or perhaps thousands of autobiographies of ordinary people,¹ at a time when an unusual interest in individual lives and even autobiography seemed to have been emerging (Dülmen 1997). The first objective of this article is therefore to link these self-referential sources to the ‘autobiographical culture’ of the early modern age. Second, all autobiography is conditioned by its audience. In the case of these life narratives this is even more so since we are faced by a type of personal document that, due to the way it was created, can be included under the label of ‘collaborative autobiography’ (Smith and Watson 2001, 53-56; Malena 2012). According to Kenneth Plummer (2001), the best way to approach these ‘documents of life’ is to try to analyze the role of each actor involved in the final result, that is, the text before us. In this case, these actors included the ‘story teller’, who composed, built or even made up his or her life story through a reflexive process; and the ‘coaxer, coacher or coercer’ with the power to elicit – and edit – the story. The latter can be an anthropologist, a journalist, a confessor or, why not, as in the life stories studied here, a courtroom interrogator, all of whom occupied a position of power over the former. Our second objective will thus be to understand how both inquisitors and notaries biased or conditioned these types of life narratives. However, despite the oppressive and even alienating context in which they were uttered, one of the most fascinating and surprising elements of these statements is that they reveal how some defendants subtly tried to resist, showing an unexpected agency similar to what have been called ‘the arts of resistance’ (Scott 1990). The ultimate goal of this study is to discuss this agency by exploring some of the strategies based on the selective memory of the narrators and their performance abilities.

2. *The ‘Story Tellers’: The ‘Autobiographical Culture’ of the Early Modern Age*

Michel Foucault was one of the first scholars to draw attention to a kind of source where one could find ‘lives of a few lines or a few pages, nameless misfortunes and adventures gathered into a handful of words’; ‘brief lives’ of ‘infamous people’, who have been caught in archives

¹ This article is based on 2725 processes of faith from the Court of Toledo, located in the Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid (AHN), most of them between 1561 and 1819. Of these, 1079 contained *a discurso de la vida*, the last one in 1804. See my doctoral thesis (Loriente Torres, 2023), which is expected to be published in book form (presumably in 2024) as *Los discursos de la vida. Autobiografía e Inquisición en la Edad Moderna*.

and libraries because of their ‘encounter’ or ‘collision’ with power (Foucault 1997). Although he neither referred specifically to inquisitorial documentation nor discussed its autobiographical nature, nothing seems to fit the idea more than our documents, which center on a sort of autobiography of people who were forced to tell their own story. Given this premise, it is hard to think in terms of any kind of autobiography, a genre traditionally associated with freedom or even self-assertion. The first scholar to see ‘an Inquisitorial process as a sort of autobiography’ was Adrienne S. Mandel (1980, 155). Besides Foucault’s ideas, she based her hypothesis on the concept of autobiography proposed by Philippe Lejeune: ‘Retrospective prose narrative that a real person constructs about their own existence, focusing on their individual life, particularly the story of their personality’ (1975, 14).² According to this definition, our sources cannot, strictly speaking, be considered autobiographies, basically because they do not include the features traditionally associated with the literary genre born toward the end of eighteenth century. For instance, their authors do not deal with the history of their personality. Nevertheless, when reading these texts, one feels that they are ‘some kind’ of autobiography. A quite appropriate concept to escape from this dead end would be ‘egodocument’, coined by Jacques Presser in the 1950s and described as ‘those historical sources in which the user is confronted with an “I”, or occasionally ... a “he”, continuously present in the text’ (Dekker 2002, 7). In fact, the concept has been applied to the analysis of judicial documentation (Schulze 1996). However, it also has drawbacks (von Greyerz 2010). On the other hand, in these sources there is a clear notion of ‘identity’. In particular, we should talk of ‘performative identity’ or ‘narrative identity’ (Goffman 1959; Bruss 1976; Butler 1988). But this second term might also lead us to a dead end or complicate things more than help us (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). For this reason, we prefer the more operational idea of ‘autobiographical culture’,³ by which is meant how a person in any historical context or period tells his or her life story. These life narratives share a lot with the way ordinary people used to talk about themselves in early modern Spain or elsewhere in Europe. To start with, the expression used to denote them is revealing: *discurso de la vida*, which, along with *Vida*, is the locution most frequently used to refer to what today would be understood as an autobiography. For instance, we can find it in the title of Alonso Contreras’ *Discurso de mi vida desde que salí a servir al rey, de edad de catorce años, que fue el año de 1597, hasta el fin del año 1630, por primero de octubre, que comencé esta relación*.⁴ The name is not however the only element that these narratives take from the ‘autobiographical culture’ of the period, as we shall see in a moment.

Reading these life stories, the reader is immediately struck by two powerful impressions. First, the feeling of actually listening to the ‘voices’ of defendants, which will be discussed in detail below. Second, the sensation that the main characteristic of these documentary sources is that they are ‘eclectic’. Indeed, this is one of the few features proposed to describe them (Kagan and Dyer 2004, 6; Amelang 2011, 40), which is unquestionably true, at least at first glance. But if we carry out a thorough examination, it will be seen that these sources actually follow several delimited models. A first differentiation should be made between life narratives before and after 1561. As has already been mentioned, some kind of life narrative can be found in the procedural documentation of the Spanish Inquisition from the time of its foundation by the

² Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

³ Although not with the exact same meaning it has when I encountered the expression for the first time in Amelang 1998b; for more on the closely related concept of ‘popular autobiography’, see Amelang 1998a.

⁴ Biblioteca Nacional de España (BNE), Mss/7460, <<http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000145513>> (accessed on 1 February 2024); on this work, see de Contreras 1983, V-LVIII; Sendón 2017).

Catholic monarchs in 1478. The first life stories are rarer and shorter than the later counterparts, and normally focused on the sins allegedly committed by their narrators or alluded to some kind of events related to their sins. For instance, this is the statement of Andrés González de Alía (Avenzoza Vera 2021), prosecuted as a Judaizer in 1486:

Me acuerdo que oy [oí] dezir a mi padre, que Dios aya, que, siendo pequeño en mi niñez, que me ovo llevado un mi agüelo que se llamava Fernando García Cabeça de Oro a la Puebla del Alcoçer donde él vivía desde Guadalupe, e que estando con él me cortó un poco del capullo de mi verga, e desde esto supo mi padre que fue por my [mí], e que sobre ello ovieron muy grandes enojos, de tal manera que, aunque fallasçió el dicho mi aguello, padre de mi padre, nunca fue a su enterramiento.⁵

That changed in 1561 when a set of new instructions was established that *systematically* required defendants to depose an oral account of their own lives under the name of *discurso de la vida* (García 1591, 10r-10v; Valdés 1561, 29r). This study is based above all on these life stories. After all, what better autobiography can there be – at least, formally speaking – than when it is explicitly asked for? But not all life accounts were specifically required. The story of Francisco de la Bastida, which is presented below, is a case in point. And then there were the life narratives told by people who came before the inquisitors spontaneously of their own accord to confess to some kind of offense they had committed. In these cases, we should bear in mind that the confession itself could be part of a strategy and thus might have lacked spontaneity. Of 2725 cases investigated between 1561 and 1819 by the court of Toledo, we have transcribed 424 life stories. The shortest, consisting of thirteen words, was uttered by Alonso Sánchez; prosecuted in 1570 for claiming that fornication – which was seen as a crime of *deshonestidad* – was not a sin, he stated ‘que nasçió en La Guardia y allí a estado toda su vida’.⁶ The most extensive, consisting of six thousand, five hundred and thirty-one words, was the spontaneous deposition of Antonio Rodríguez de Amezquita in 1664. In terms of number of audiences, Agustina Juana Manuela Pimentel, prosecuted as a Judaizer in 1718, declared her *discurso* over three interrogations. Having established that each audience or interrogation took three hours (de Torquemada 1630, 13v), her four thousand-word life story took about nine hours to complete. However, while variety seems to be the rule, the average length of three hundred and fifty-four words suggests that, rather than autobiographies, these texts should be referred to as micro-autobiographies. Likewise, although statistics do not confirm this point, a certain tendency for them to become longer over time can be noted. Part of the reason for this may be because the judicial process as a whole tended to become more detailed and bureaucratic over time.

Regarding structure, these life narratives appear to be loose, but in fact they are not. Their authors usually began with a first part covering information about their birth, childhood and upbringing, which includes the things they had done during that time, and/or with whom they had spent those early years, especially their parents. All this might be seen as a truism since we are talking about an autobiography. But they are also the same sorts of things that we can find in other contemporary autobiographical accounts outside the Inquisition. For instance, Teresa

⁵ AHN, Inq., leg. 253, exp. 7, 8r. (I remember that I heard my father say, may God be with him, that when I was a little boy in my childhood I was taken from Guadalupe by my grandfather, who was called Fernando García Cabeça de Oro, to Puebla del Alcoçer, where he lived, and while I was with him he cut off a bit of the bud of my penis, and since my father knew about this, he came for me and they had great argument about it, so much so that when the said grandfather, my father’s father died, my father did not go to his burial).

⁶ AHN, Inq., leg. 74, exp. 27, 8r. (That he was born in La Guardia and has been there all his life).

of Ávila begins her famous *Vida* by talking about them as well (1r).⁷ Indeed, both text types have been compared in terms of topic, style and structure (Herpoel 1999). The comparison thus gives us a glimpse of the ‘autobiographical culture’ of the period, where both ancestors and origins had a preminent place. Furthermore, there is a second stage in all these stories when the protagonists left the nest and joined the outside world, usually working or studying. Sometimes they leave it in happy circumstances, such as the beginning of university studies, departure to work with a relative, often an uncle, or the beginning of a clerical life. But frequently some misfortune puts an end to this first part of the narrative, such as the death of a parent, the captivity of the declarant or some personal conflict. From this point on, the thematic and stylistic possibilities are endless, but there are two structural choices. Some declarants describe all their travels and the towns where they have been, without detailing what happened in those places, and adding that information at the end. Others do the opposite, detailing their experiences from town to town and master to master. In both cases, the narration normally flows chronologically, but many times the author flashes forwards and backwards in his or her narration. In any event, all the narratives can be described as ‘narratives in movement’, fitting perfectly with the *mozo de muchos amos* – something like ‘servant of many masters’ – structure typical of the picaresque novel (Alcalá Yáñez y Rivera 2005). In fact, these two types of texts have been compared (Gómez-Moriana 1980; Gitlitz 2000). Moreover, they also fit in well with one of the entries for *discurso* in Covarrubias’ dictionary: ‘la corrida que se haze a una parte, y a otra’ (de Covarrubias y Orozco 1611, 217v).⁸ More specifically, although some of our protagonists claimed never to have left home, many others describe a constant wandering throughout Spain, Europe or sometimes even further afield. For instance, Juan Calvo de Padilla, prosecuted in 1573 for saying in a sermon that Mary Magdalene was not a sinner,⁹ explained in detail during several hearings that he had resided in Revilla Vallejera (his birthplace) and Roa (both in Burgos), Cuéllar (Segovia), Salamanca, Barcelona, Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), Chiapas (Mexico), Lisbon (Portugal), Castile (probably Valladolid, where the Court was at the time), Rome, Valladolid (again), Rome, Genoa, Alicante, Seville, Cape Verde (Africa), Lisbon (Portugal), Castile (again), Rome, Valladolid (again), Lisbon (again), Rome, Genoa, Alicante, Seville, Cape Verde (again), Portugal, Barcelona (again) and, finally, at the Court (this time in Madrid). If we calculate the time he reported spending at each place, the count will be found to be quite consistent with how old he said he was at the time of the declaration. Likewise, it is remarkable the number of masters and jobs that some declarants confess to having served or held. Martín Díaz is quite eloquent when he declares that ‘[h]a servido a tantos amos que no se le acordaría los nombres de la terçia parte’.¹⁰

Sometimes, declarants explain the reasons for their pilgrimage, ranging from the search for work, the attempt at personal improvement or simply wanderlust. Juan Borgoñón, after leaving his home in Besançon (Franche-Comté), settles with a soldier in Nancy (Lorraine) where ‘había tudescos, y a este le dio gana de ir en Alemania para aprender aquella lengua’.¹¹ Of course, he tried to avoid suspicion for traveling to a Protestant country, and it was a good excuse. Speaking of jobs, they were also very varied but sooner or later many declarants served as soldiers. Particularly

⁷ A manuscript copy can be found in Biblioteca Nacional de España (BNE), Mss/2601, <<http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000044170&page=1>> (accessed 14 March 2023).

⁸ (the running done from one place to another).

⁹ AHN, Inq., leg. 217, exp. 10.

¹⁰ AHN, Inq., leg. 15, n.p. (he had served so many masters that he could not remember the names of even a third of them).

¹¹ AHN, Inq., leg. 115, exp. 5, 23v. (there were Tudesques, and he wanted to go to Germany to learn the language).

intriguing was the famous Eleno or Elena de Céspedes (Kagan and Dyer 2004, 64-87), a person who claimed to be a hermaphrodite but whose life story is quite paradigmatic.¹² After leaving her or his master as a slave, she/he gets married as a woman, and has a child who died. Then she/he left his or her husband and as a man she/he enrolled in the army fighting in the Alpujarras War. After that she/he worked as a tailor and weaver for a time until she/he had a quarrel, when she/he was imprisoned and obliged to dress again as a woman. Then she/he became a surgeon and with her or his new profession, as a man again, she/he enrolled one more time in the army. Finally, she/he was denounced for bigamy when she/he was trying to settle down by marrying a woman. While the case may be unusual, the way it is told is quite ordinary compared to other ‘inquisitorial autobiographies’. Many of them finish in the current time of narration. Some even describe the moment of imprisonment or the narrator’s entrance into the very same hearing. Maybe that is why Cervantes, mocking the picaresque genre, makes Ginés de Pasamonte state, when he was asked if he had already finished the life story he claimed to be writing, ‘¿Cómo puede estar acabado –respondió él–, si aún no está acabada mi vida? Lo que está escrito es desde mi Nacimiento hasta el punto que esta última vez me han echado en galeras’ (DQ, cap. XII).¹³

As already mentioned, the other impression one gains while reading these life stories is a strong feeling of listening to the ‘voices’ of defendants. Michel Foucault called it a ‘physical impression’ (1997, 158). Carlo Ginzburg also referred to it, when he stated that while reading inquisitorial trials he often felt as if he was ‘looking over the judges’ shoulders’ (1989, 158). None of them, however, either because it was obvious or because they were concerned about other issues, related that sense of closeness to the oral origin of these sources. Not only were these testimonies declared orally but their authors were also rooted in a predominantly oral culture. As a consequence, many features of these narratives actually derive from this circumstance. According to Walter Ong, a mark of orality is to be ‘additive rather than subordinative’ (2012, 38). This translated into texts full of illative elements such as the conjunction ‘and’, which imprint these stories with a sense of action that sustains their narrative tension. The following is an extract from the autobiographical statement of Juan López, who was prosecuted as a renegade in 1580:

... y me llebaron Argel y fui esclavo del rrey de Argel, y el dicho rrey de Argel me presentó al rrey de Fez que se dezía el *Maluco*, y estando en su poder el dicho rrey maluco llamado por otro nombre, el *xarife* me llamó y me preguntó que cómo me llamaba, y a esto le rrespondí que me llamaba Juan López, y a esto el dicho rrey me dixo: hazme plazer de tornarte moro, y luego yo le dixé que era contento y así me torné moro; y me puso por nombre Pichirín y por sobre nombre Morato, y luego me mandó rretajar y me rretajaron, y me dixerón que dixere “*ley la hilala mahoma rracurala*” y así lo hice.¹⁴

Here we can also perceive another feature that makes these readings an immersive experience: the introduction of direct speech (Díez Revenga Torres and Igualada Belchí 1992; Eberenz and

¹² AHN, Inq., leg. 234, exp. 24, see the case in <<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/4580314?nm>>, accessed 1 February 2024.

¹³ (how can it be finished, when my life is not yet finished? All that is written is from my birth down to the point when they sent me to the galleys this last time).

¹⁴ AHN, leg. 195, exp. 3, 3v-4r. (And they took me to Algiers, and I was a slave to the king of Algiers, and the said king of Algiers presented me to the king of Fez who called himself the *Maluco*, and while I was in his power the said king of Algiers, called by another name the *Xarife*, called me and asked what my name was, and to this I replied that my name was Juan López, and to this the said king told me: “please me do me the favor of turning Moorish [Muslim]”, and then I told him that I was happy and so I became Moor; and he gave me the name of Pichirín and Morato as a nickname. And then he ordered me to be cut [circumcised] and they cut me, and they told me to say “*ley la hilala mahoma rracurala*” [the Shahada] and I did so).

De la Torre 2003). These statements very often reproduce pieces of conversation between the narrator and a third party, in this case, López and the king of Fez. The purpose was to create a sense of both truthfulness and veracity by trying to bring the audience to the very moment of conversation. But at the same time, reading it creates the feeling of witnessing the conversation between López and the king of Fez. Likewise, an oral style is ‘aggregative rather than analytic’ (Ong 2012, 38). This feature is associated with memory formulas used in the past, which have come down to us through folklore in the form of clichés. For instance, López declared further on that he and his family had been escorted by ‘*cuatro moros que nos abían prometido por nuestro dinero de ponernos en tierra de cristianos*’. But when they arrived at about ‘*siete leguas de melilla salieron unos moros salteadores*’.¹⁵ It would be hard to know for sure whether these figures were correct or not, but the numbers four and seven today are still widely in use – at least, in Spanish culture – in everyday expressions and folktales. For instance, nowadays we say *había cuatro gatos* meaning that there were few people; or the very well-known mythical seven-league boots of *Puss in Boots*, whose popular and oral origins are beyond doubt, is still known (Waters 2001). In any case, they are elements that make the reading more familiar.

Another characteristic of orality is its quality of being ‘redundant or “copious”’ (Ong 2012, 39). This is related to the immediacy of oral communication, which vanishes the moment it is uttered. So, to avoid losing the thread, the language must be more repetitive than in written forms of communication. Returning to López’s declaration, this mechanism can be observed when he repeatedly uses the phrase ‘*y el dicho rey*’,¹⁶ the frequent recurrence of which in this documentation contributes to the narrative tension. On the other hand, these kinds of expressions hail also from legal language, although the line of separation between some of these features is quite fine.

The next feature Ong lists as specific to an oral culture is its materiality or its ‘close[ness] to the human lifeworld’ (43). In other words, an oral culture is more embedded in the material world than in metaphysical or abstract reflections, which translates into greater vividness, immediacy and the impulse towards action. Accordingly, its narrators were more prone to material, temporal and visuospatial references based on visual memory than is the case today, since we are part of a written culture. That is why these statements are full of expressions such as ‘a stone’s throw away’, ‘in the war of Granada’, ‘for the year of the plague’ and with others like ‘at the Puerta de Toledo’, ‘next to the clothing store in Calle Mayor’. All those references help create a mental image of what is being read, contributing to the feeling of immersion, and they are part of what has been called ‘the language of memory’ (Franceschi 1991). Likewise, it has always been argued that one of the characteristics of autobiographical sources before the birth of autobiography as a genre in the eighteenth century was their lack of interiority, which was widely related to the rise of modern individualism (Molino 1980; Davis 1986; Burckhardt 1961; Martin 2004). Thus, it is possible that this feature had more to do with the materiality of their oral origins than anything else. Nevertheless, some of the autobiographical writings of the period, such as ‘soldiers’ lives’ and other texts very close to ours, showed their protagonists’ feelings through the actions they performed (Levisi 1984; Pérez-Villanueva 2014; Sáez 2019).

A lack of inwardness does not mean a lack of feelings. Apart from the manifestations of contrition, it is quite rare to find in the *discursos de la vida* allusions to filial or romantic love. In fact, I have only found the following examples. Juan Ramírez, prosecuted for bigamy in 1562, when

¹⁵ AHN, leg. 195, exp. 3, 3v-4r. (*four* Moors who had promised us for our money to take us to Christian territory). (*seven* leagues from Melilla, some Moors came out to rob us).

¹⁶ (and the said king).

answering the question about when he met his second wife, stated that ‘no se acuerda cuántos años era, más de que sirviendo de sacristán en el dicho lugar del Quintanar *se enamoró della*’ (my italics).¹⁷ Antonio Rodríguez de Amezquita, prosecuted as a Judaizer in 1664, referred to his helper, who had recently passed away, as someone ‘a quien llamaba tío no porque este tubiese parentesco con él, sino *por el mucho amor* que le tenía le dio en llamar sobrino’.¹⁸ These cases are truly rare because Ramírez and Amezquita are the only two such examples we have come across among all the Toledo court files. While that lack of expressed feelings could be a consequence of the oral culture of their narrators, probably it is not the only reason that explains it. This is especially likely since these life stories were designed for a specific audience and for a particular context, just like other autobiographical texts. What I mean is that these kinds of allusions, such as to romantic love, were not relevant here. On the contrary, if there is surely one type of feeling in these sources, and one that in addition contributed to the sensation of witnessing the scene, it is related to contrition. For instance, Nicolás Alemán, prosecuted for Lutheranism in 1569, after declaring his life story and being ordered to return to his cell, ‘se hincó de rodillas y se hirió los pechos muy recio llamando a dios y llorando reçiamente’.¹⁹ Not to mention the meticulously recorded torture hearings, which reproduce the screams and laments of the people subjected to the so-called ‘question of torment’. That said, the case of López, when he claimed to be *contento* – ‘glad’ – to embrace Islam, seems to contradict this idea. Nevertheless, by that he probably meant that he was doing it ‘willingly’ rather than expressing any feeling of happiness.

Finally, in these sources one can find other elements typical of an oral culture and that contributes to a certain extent to the sense of closeness, such as ‘empathy and participation’ (Kryk-Katovsky 2000, 208). Although the *discursos* would be the most ‘monologic’ part of it, this documentation is the result of a ‘dialogic’ exchange between interrogator and interrogated (Ginzburg 1989, 141-149). And that dynamics remains embedded in both its structure and in certain elements which reach us, readers of the twenty-first century, through time. For example, when the declarant asks a rhetorical question and we cannot help but feel alluded to, when a humorous element is read that makes us smile, or when reading the laments of a defendant under torture vividly transcribed by the scribe. Besides, many of these elements were needed to frame the narrative. In other words, people from an oral culture did not tell a story straight away, but they very often took a long storyline turn just to tell something apparently simple (Arnold 2001, 86; Cohen 2015, 143). This fact also contributes to make these sources almost hypnotic.

3. *The Coaxers: How Scribes and Inquisitors Biased or Framed the Life Stories*

The first bias of these life stories is that despite being narrated orally (or even if their authors belonged to an oral culture), their final form is written. That implies *per se* a series of logical changes, even today (Slembrouck 1992). However, there were other changes deriving from a procedural and written culture. As a consequence, reported speech predominates in our documentation. It was introduced by the *notarios del secreto* (inquisitorial notaries), who give us the defendants’ answers in the third person through declarative verbs in sentences such as ‘asked about the discourse of his [or her] life, s/he said that s/he was born...’. This was intended to bestow on the documentation

¹⁷ AHN, leg. 224, exp. 5, 22r. (he does not remember how old he was, but it was while serving as a sacristan in the aforementioned place of Quintanar *when he fell in love* with her) (my italics).

¹⁸ AHN, leg. 177, exp. 1, 71v. (whom he called uncle, not because he was related to him, but *out of the love* he had for him, he called him nephew) (my italics).

¹⁹ AHN, Inq., leg. 199, exp. 8, n.p. (fell to his knees and beat his chest very hard, calling out to God and weeping loudly).

a sense of impartiality, committing it exclusively to the truth of the words pronounced, not to the substance of the speech (Díez Revenga Torres and Igualada Belchí 1992). However, notaries sometimes allowed narrators to take control of their statements by reproducing a conversation between them and a third party, as in the aforementioned case of Juan López. While the narrators' purposes were to make their statements more convincing, the scribe's intention stemmed from the probative legal force of the quotation. We should moreover bear in mind that on many occasions the only possible condemnatory evidence was the defendant's own statement.

It was far from coincidental that there were several instructions regarding the literality of these proceedings. For instance, we might interpret the next instruction as calling for it: 'Y acabada la Audiencia, los Inquisidores mandará[n] al Notario q lea todo lo q ha escrito en ella, porque pueda el reo, si quisiere, añadir, ò emendar alguna cosa' (Valdés 1561, 29v).²⁰ Indeed, the expression *de verbo ad verbum* – 'word by word' – can be found throughout many inquisitorial treatises such as the *Directorium inquisitorum* (Eymerich 1587). That said, to assess the degree of literality that can be expected from the scribe's work, we should consider the contemporaneous concept of literality, which was based on meaning rather than on accuracy (Ong 2012, *passim*). As a matter of fact, the concept of literality *de verbo ad verbum* literally comes from a written culture. Considering that difference, and the necessary transition from an oral to a written form, the degree of accuracy expected in this kind of source is relatively high, although there is debate among specialists regarding this question (del Col 1984; Franceschi 1991; Eberenz 1994; Hiltunen 1996; Kryk-Katovsky 2000; Willumsen 2015). Moreover, some of these scholars affirm that the language that we can find in these sources is not real but constructed or reconstructed, as Daniel Collins has suggested (2001). In other words, it reproduces or imitates oral language with a legal purpose. In any case, the minutes were given to be read or were directly read to the declarants for confirmation, which was not a mere procedural formalism since some of them disagreed, complaining about the work performed. For instance, Joan Baptista, or Mustafa, as he called himself, a runaway slave who was caught when he was about to cross the French border in 1591, denied that he was going to his native land or even saying so, claiming instead that 'el escribano pensó tales palabras sin aberlas dicho'.²¹

Taking all this into account, the 'voice' that we seem to hear is that of the notary who lends his to the declarant. At least some of the words and micro-expressions written in the proceedings do not come from declarants but from notaries. Normally these interventions would not affect the content of the declarations, otherwise they would not have confirmed the record. To illustrate this point, let us see the life stories of Luis Méndez de Ulloa, 30 years old, prosecuted for blasphemy in 1589;²² Ana Hernández, 40 years old, prosecuted for bigamy in 1595;²³ the slave Antonia Vicencia, also 40 years old;²⁴ Lucía Hernández, prosecuted in 1596 as a *morisca*;²⁵ and finally, Miguel Flores, prosecuted for scandalous words.²⁶ All of them had different backgrounds, ages, origins. Lucía Hernández even declared, through an interpreter, another circumstance that has not yet been addressed. However, all of them have at least two things in common. First, in their statements they used the expression 'a do se

²⁰ (Following the end of the Audience, the inquisitors will order the notary to read everything that has been written, so that the defendant can add or amend anything if he wishes to do so).

²¹ AHN, Inq., leg. 194, exp. 16, n.p. (the scribe thought such words without saying them aloud).

²² AHN, Inq., leg. 41, exp. 8, 20r.

²³ AHN, Inq., leg. 26, exp. 1, 55r.

²⁴ AHN, Inq., leg. 48, exp. 24, 31r.

²⁵ AHN, Inq., leg. 193, exp. 22, n.p.

²⁶ AHN, Inq., leg. 201, exp. 41, n.p.

crio' – 'where he or she was raised' – instead of the more common 'a donde se crio' or 'donde se crio'. And second, the notary who transcribed their life stories was Francisco de Arze. So, it is highly likely the expression comes from him. Another example to support what we say involves Salomon Bergom, who offered a vividly written life account in his own hand in 1792. There, he writes in a mixture of Italian and Spanish: 'Salamon Bergom de mi primier nombre, e aora mi chiamo Carlos Bergamo ... che essendo de su nacimiento e creado in Ley del testamento Antigo e che de algunos agnos che a tenido veredero deseo de abrazare la lei de gesucRisto'.²⁷ Nevertheless, when he testified orally just some days later, his new statement – written down by a notary – does not show any hint of the Italian language; on the contrary, he speaks Spanish perfectly well. What could explain this linguistic miracle if not the intervention of the notary, who lent him his voice?

In addition, these life stories were biased by a procedural frame established in inquisitorial instructions. Everything that was supposed to happen during the first interrogation – or *Primera Audiencia* – was perfectly specified in the new instructions that Fernando Valdés implemented in 1561 (29r). According to them, defendants had to be taken out of his cell by the bailiff and brought before the tribunal, whose members asked them some questions regarding procedure. All these opening queries could prompt some kind of life narrative. For instance, the defendant was asked: 'cómo se llama, de dónde es natural, qué edad y oficio tiene, y qua[n]to ha que vino preso' (García 1591, 9r).²⁸ Indeed, sometimes the answer to these questions practically became a *discurso* in terms of size and content. Then, the prisoners were asked about their family and ancestors, the so-called *genealogía*. Here again their answers could be quite self-referential, especially when the accused knew what the charges against them were. For instance, some prosecuted for bigamy, when talking about their marriage, directly confessed their sin. The same applied to the next question: the level of education, particularly in the cases of people who had studied. After questioning defendants about their knowledge of Christian doctrine, by requiring them to recite the basic prayers, they were asked if they had left the realms (of Castille) and with whom. All these questions might not only prompt some kind of life narrative; they also very often overlapped in content. That was certainly the case of the final question: '...si sabe, presume, o sospecha la causa porque ha sido preso' (10v).²⁹ Indeed, that was the case in the trial of Francisco de la Bastida studied below. Finally, the first warning – *primera monición* – was read. As the prisoner was being returned to his cell until the next hearing, he was urged to think about the possible reason for his imprisonment. But immediately before that, defendants were asked the direct and explicit autobiographical question under the name of *discurso de la vida*, although Valdés' instructions did not specifically mention the expression. This appears for the first time in the *Orden de processar* by Pablo García the defendant: 'Preguntado por el discurso de su vida. Dixo, que nació en tal pueblo, etc. Declare dónde se ha criado, y las partes donde ha residido, y con quien ha tratado y comunicado, todo muy por estenso, y muy particularmente' (10r-10v).³⁰

²⁷ AHN, Inq., leg. 137, exp. 15, n.p. (Salamon Bergom as my first name, and now my name is Carlos Bergamo ... who being born and raised in the Law of the Old Testament and who for some years has truly desired to embrace the law of Jesus Christ).

²⁸ (what his name is, where he is from, how old he is, and what is his job, and how long it has it been since he was imprisoned).

²⁹ (if he or she knew or guessed the cause for which he or she had been imprisoned).

³⁰ (Asked for the *discurso de su vida*, he said that he was born in such a town, etc. Stated where he has been brought up, and the places where he has resided, and with whom he has dealt and communicated, everything at length, and with all particulars).

This particular instruction led Jean-Pierre Dedieu to think that defendants received some suggestions regarding how to declare their life stories. He affirmed that there was no autobiographical but only biographical information in them since they ‘were not spontaneous but answers to a standard questionnaire concerning the location, duration, and activities of the accused at different places’ (1986, 165), which implied that maybe declarants were asked these questions separately and the notaries put them together in the proceedings. If this were the case, the *discurso* would be the outcome of a questionnaire. I do not agree with Dedieu on this point. First, because if that were true, it has not left any trace in the records. Instead, what we find is a single, direct and often lengthy answer that sometimes includes all of these topics and sometimes does not. And we find it in what seems without a shadow of doubt to be the original records, with all their amendments, notes and corrections. Secondly, even being a questionnaire, defendants still had the leeway to take the statements wherever they wanted within certain limits, and they did precisely that, as we will see below. However, it is unquestionable that García’s manual matches with the model followed by these life stories. That would explain their structure. As we have seen above, their authors began by relating their date of birth, childhood and home upbringing until they left the nest, describing from this point on all the places and people with whom they stayed. In line with this, these life stories would be framed by this model. From early on inquisitorial notaries and other scribes from legal institutions throughout early modern Europe did not accept a simple ‘yes’ or ‘not’ as a reply. Instead, they encouraged declarants to develop their answers, which made the *discurso* a dialogical exchange between the inquisitor or scribe and the deponent. However, there is no trace of such encouragements in the proceedings (Eberenz and De la Torre 2003, 65; Bähr 2015). That would also explain why narrators seem to be so meticulous by adding abundant details about what they have done in such and such a place and with whom. That said, we do not know whether defendants were obliged to follow this model, or this model followed the way they normally declared their stories, because that structure also corresponds perfectly well to the way other contemporary autobiographical accounts outside this context developed, not only in terms of structure but also of content. As we have seen, one feature of oral culture was being ‘redundant or “copious” ’ (Ong 2012, 39). That would explain the verbal excess typical of these narratives, not to mention that we already find this model in procedural documentation even before García’s manual was published for the first time in 1568 (Santiago Medina 2016, 119-125). To be precise, we find it from 1561, probably following Valdés’ instructions. At the same time, García’s manual was conceived – like all treatises of its kind – as a practical tool that described the way things normally happened, as it was not the type of compulsive manual that Valdés’ would be. According to this idea, we might interpret the instructions as more descriptive than normative. In other words, the topics and structure constituted *per se* what was utterly understood to be the *discurso de la vida*, not an order of how to declare it. But the most compelling evidence is that the documentation gives an appearance of fluidity, so that under the heading ‘preguntado/a por el discurso de su vida...’ (García 1591, 10r).³¹ we find a single clear and continuous answer without any visible or explicit verbal interchange or interruption. For the moment, we cannot solve this conundrum but probably the truth lies somewhere between the two possibilities.

Another mystery regarding this practice is why it was implemented in 1561. Why did all the defendants begin to be systematically asked for their life stories at this moment? The answer

³¹ (Asked for the discourse of his or her life).

would help us determine how these life stories were biased. Apart from his claim to standardize the process of faith,³² we do not even know why Fernando Valdés specifically implemented the question of the *discurso* in the first place. It has been said that it could have been devised to make the accused feel more comfortable, or to get a first impression of him or her (Gómez-Moriana 1983, 110; González Novalín 1986, 105; Thomas 2001, 173). But also that it might have been a trap (Gitlitz 2000; Graizbord 2004, 110; Kagan 2005, 92; Amelang 2011, 37). For it certainly became a trap, especially since defendants did not know what the charges against them were, which is a teleological way of thinking about it. We think the answer is simpler. The key to understanding is the sacrament of confession, because the relation between life stories, the process of faith and the sacrament of confession is quite close.

On the one hand, the whole process was inspired by the sacrament as a means of reconciling the sinner with the community (Prosperi 1994 and 1996). Therefore, these life narratives are partially inspired by the sense of obligation imposed by the sacrament. That would explain why those first life stories were mainly focused on sins. The sacrament of confession also illuminates why we can find very similar personal narratives in other inquisitorial tribunals not belonging to the Hispanic Monarchy. For instance, Giordano Bruno, prosecuted by the Roman Inquisition in 1593, was asked in the first interrogation what his name and surname was, who his parents were or had been, what country and nation he was from, and what his profession and his father's was (Firpo 1993, 156). His answer was to declare straightforwardly, without interruption, during the next two hearings what could be considered without a doubt one of our *discursos* in terms of both characteristics and content. The same could be said of Cecilia Ferrazzi, prosecuted in Venice in 1664, who was asked directly in her second interrogation to continue 'il racconto del corso di sua vita'.³³ (Ferrazzi 1990, 28; 2001, 27). In any case, both the first life stories found in the Spanish Inquisition proceedings and those outside them are normally shorter, focused on the alleged sins, and less consistent. They are also rarer. Nonetheless, the main difference is that they were not required in a systematic way.

On the other hand, the sacrament is at the core of the contemporary autobiographical culture and beyond. From St Augustine's *Confessions* to Rousseau's sequel with the same name, the sacrament helped create an 'autobiographical conscience', a sense of inwardness that obliged penitents to engage in a dialogue with themselves (Zimmermann 1971). It has also been claimed that the concept of the sacrament of confession lies at the origin of the 'female spiritual autobiographies' labeled as 'autobiografías por mandato' (Herpoel 1999; Weber 2005).³⁴ Accordingly, in the autobiographical culture of the period people were compelled to tell their life stories in front of a higher authority. Without that, apparently there seems to be no point in telling a life story. That is the motivation alluded to by Teresa of Ávila to justify her life story: she was ordered to do so by her spiritual fathers (Weber 1990). And that could be the reason why the (in)famous Lázaro of Tormes tells his life story to his 'Lordship', as the picaresque novel would have been a subversion or a mockery of the ritual discourse produced in front of the inquisitors (Gómez-Moriana 1980). Besides, this coincides with the purpose of other autobiographical writings of the time, such as 'self-justifying memorials' (Andrés Robres 2004 and 2005).

³² '... que en todas las Inquisiciones se tenga, y guarde vn mismo estilo de proceder, y que en esto sean conformes: en algunas inquisiciones no se ha guardado, ni guarda como conuenía' (1561, 27v). (... that in all the Inquisitions, the same style of procedure be followed and kept, and to it all of them be conformed, because in some Inquisitions it has not been observed, nor is kept as it should be).

³³ (the account of her life).

³⁴ (Autobiographies on command).

In any case, an element that contributed to the creation of a conscience of inwardness was that the confessional manuals that became popular after the Lateran Council in 1215 recommended confessing once a year. A recommendation that the Council of Trent in 1551 turned into an obligation (Prosperi 1996, 258-277 and 2001). In such manuals, in order to help penitents to remember the sins they committed over such a long time, they were advised to go through ‘los lugares, tiempos, personas, negocios en q se ha ocupado desde la otra su confession’.³⁵ While all these were questions similar to those proposed by Valdés in his instructions to be asked of prisoners – ‘dónde se ha criado y con q personas, y si ha estudiado alguna facultad, y si ha salido destos reynos y en q compañías’ (1561, 29r)³⁶ –, they are remarkably identical to Pablo García’s manual on the information included in the *discurso*: ‘dónde se ha criado, y las partes donde ha residido, y con quien ha tratado y comunicado, todo muy por estenso, y muy particularmente’ (1591, 10r-10v).³⁷ This suggests that since these confessional manuals proposed a mnemotechnic methodology by which to try to remember all the sins, that would be the very same reason behind the inquisitorial request set in motion in 1561: to help defendants to remember and therefore to confess their sins. Just like the whole process of faith, whose principal objective was the same, to try to extract a confession with which to reconcile the sinner with the community (Prosperi 1994 and 1996).

4. Agency in the Life Narratives

In contrast to the specific, narrowly focused questions asked in other parts of the interrogation, for instance who the defendant’s parents were, the *discurso* was more open-ended. Therefore, when defendants were required to tell the story of their lives, they enjoyed much more ‘freedom’. After the first questions related to their upbringing, whether part of a questionnaire or not, they were ‘freer’ to declare what they wanted, and they did so. In this regard, there was a very basic first choice. While some defendants remained focused on the sins allegedly committed, or alluded to some kind of events related to them, others on the contrary spoke about everything except their sins. This choice largely depended on several reasons, such as whether they knew or guessed the charges against them, because, as is known, the entire process was secret. In any case, narrators were not – apparently – interrupted, even when what they were recounting had nothing to do with their case. In fact, sometimes it is baffling to find pages and pages of nonsense, or a testimony that is clearly of no interest to the inquisitors. Why did notaries, in these circumstances, keep writing it down with all the effort that this entailed? Nevertheless, it should not surprise us. Apart from the fact that the question was more open than others, there was a series of instructions that ordered inquisitors to allow the accused to speak freely ‘no siendo cosas impertinentes las que dixere’ (Valdés 1561, 29r),³⁸ or to declare the *discurso* ‘todo muy por estenso, y muy particularmente’ (García 1591, 10v).³⁹ According to John Arnold, ‘this kind of textual

³⁵ *Confessionario Breve Y Muy Prouehoso Con El Vita Christi Con Una Instrucción Para Los Que Nuevamente Se Convierten a Nostra Santa Fe Cathólica Hecho Por Vn Deuoto Religioso De La Orden De Los Predicadores*, 15, n.p., ÖNB Digital, <<https://onb.digital/result/1083FD51>>, accessed on 1 February 2024. On confessional manuals, see González Polvillo 2010. (Go through the places, times, people, and business in which they have been engaged since their last confession).

³⁶ (where he grew up, and with which people, and if he has studied anything, and if he has left these Kingdoms, and in the company of whom).

³⁷ (where he has been brought up, and the places where he has resided, and with whom he has dealt and communicated, everything at length, and with all particulars).

³⁸ (as long as they did not say anything impertinent).

³⁹ (extensively, and with all particulars).

“excess” is necessary to place each person within the inquisitorial narrative’ (2001, 86). Not to mention that ‘an early modern speaker with an urgent story would often render not just the tale, but, as well, its frame’ (Cohen 2015, 143), which ties in with the aforementioned oral culture.

In this scenario, one of the most fascinating elements of these stories is to observe how some defendants, taking the open opportunity when their life stories were required, subtly tried to obey without obeying, something similar to what have been called ‘the arts of resistance’ (Scott 1990). This was especially surprising when one considers the coercive situation, the fact that their lives were at stake, the improvisation provoked by the possibly unexpected requirement, and the pressure of not knowing what the charges against them were, who their whistleblower might be, or whether they were before a judge, a confessor or, even, in front of the very same Almighty (Cohen 1998, 975). Some of the general strategies defendants adopted have already been partially studied (Ginzburg 1980; Vincent 1994; Benítez Sánchez-Blanco 2013). However, what has not yet been discussed is how this unexpected agency worked in a narrative sense, so to speak. In other words, how individuals said what they said, and what elements they drew on in shaping their narrative. These included their juridical and doctrinal knowledge, rhetorical skills of persuasion, and ‘selective memory’. All of them were components of authentic ‘performances’ in a broad sense of the term.

The story of Francisco de la Bastida illustrates all these characteristics.⁴⁰ He was just twenty years old when he was prosecuted in 1579 for having pretended to be an official of the Holy Office. In point of fact, he was not requested to declare the *discurso de la vida* but, after the basic questions regarding such matters as name, age, birthplace, parents and residence, the inquisitors went straight to the point and asked him the standard question that usually ended the first interrogation: ‘si sabe, presume, o sospecha la causa porque ha sido preso’ (García 1591, 10v).⁴¹ To which he answered that a year earlier, around Christmas, when he was coming from Rome with some *agnus dei* that ‘Dr. Ezquelicueta’ gave him, on his way through France five or six men came out on the road near Montpellier and, intimidating and mocking him and his religious confession, stole everything he wore, ‘en cueros vivos’ – ‘leaving him naked’ –, a very graphic expression that added some drama to the story. More was added when those men ‘made crumbs’ of the *agnus dei*, taking them away from him with a slap when he tried to retrieve the pieces from the ground, and then they urinated on them. They then threatened to kill him, but just gave him ‘más de trezientos açotes’.⁴² Finally, he saved his life by arriving in Saint-Jean-de-Védas, where he knocked on the door of an inn and ‘la guéspedes’ (the owner), seeing him naked and so badly beaten, fainted. Her husband told him later that he had probably been attacked by some German soldiers, because they had been making trouble in the area for a while. The next day he went to Narbonne ‘y allí lo remediaron con unos vestidos viejos que le dieron por amor de dios y así se vino a España’.⁴³

What can we learn from this fragment of a story? Perhaps the most striking element is the dramatic tension created by the narrator through the story of someone (himself), who was trying to save his life. Not only was he saving his life, but he was also defending his faith by trying to avoid the sacrilege on the *agnus dei*, in the context, needless to say, of the religious wars in France where the scene took place. According to the *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1726, vol. 1), the *agnus dei* were circular wafers of white wax ‘amasados por el Papa’⁴⁴ with powders from the relics of saints. Thus, they had the sacred value of a relic.

⁴⁰ AHN, Inq., leg 76, exp. 6, 148r.

⁴¹ (if he knows, presumes, or suspect the cause of his imprisonment).

⁴² AHN, Inq., leg. 76, exp. 6, 148r. (more than three hundred lashes).

⁴³ *Ibid.* (where he was given some old clothes for God’s sake, and from there he returned finally to Spain).

⁴⁴ (kneaded by the Pope).

Perhaps Francisco de la Bastida thought that the inquisitors would look favorably on his courageous defense of the faith. Many of these stories were intended to somehow win both the tribunal's sympathy and pity. Moreover, as we have seen many times, these narratives showed how their protagonists had suffered for some reason. Sometimes they have had a miserable life. For instance, one of the shortest *discursos* studied is María Calzada's, prosecuted in 1592 for questioning the virginity of Mary. In her *discurso* she stated that 'naçió en Bustarviejo y allí se a criado en casa de sus padres trayendo hazes de leña y buscándose la vida con mucha miseria para sustentar a su madre, porque su padre a onze años que murió, y que nunca jamás a salido del dicho lugar'.⁴⁵ Other defendants told longer stories of misery or gave more complicated reasons, such as Francisco de la Bastida, who had suffered while defending his faith. In any case, all these stories seem to suggest or imply that their protagonists had already suffered enough in life to expiate their possible crimes, especially through the story they are telling, related to their sin.

The second element, seen thousands of times in these narratives, is the apparently casual reference to persons of higher social rank. That is why Bastida mentioned almost casually Martín de Azpilcueta, Bartolomé de Carranza's lawyer, who was living by then in Rome while attending to the case (Tellechea Idígoras 1962). We do not know if these references were intended to make the defendants seem more respectable or somehow to invoke the power of protection of these people, even if they were not in their service.

Continuing with the story, a year later 'y como aquellos alemanes le robaron e hezieron aquella afrenta este [Francisco de la Bastida] juró que se habría de vengar dellos y sacar el corazón a uno dellos y comérsele si pudiesse'.⁴⁶ To this end, he investigated if there were German people around, and learned that the Fúcar (i.e. Fugger) family had a factor named Juan Gelder 'un hombre gordo mancebo colorado vermejo' – 'fat, bachelor, and red' – about forty or fifty years old', who lived in Almagro. Hearing this news, 'Francisco decided to take his revenge on him'. When reading the document, it is easy to imagine him angrily pronouncing these words. As a matter of fact, such an emotional state could serve as an extenuating circumstance comparable to drunkenness, although it should derive from a just cause (Gacto Fernández 1992, 33-36). It is not possible to know if Francisco was aware of this, but that is exactly what he seems to be describing. On the one hand, if he knew it, he had improbable doctrinal knowledge for a twenty-year-old boy, although, on the other hand, perhaps he was simply relying on common sense. In any case, his skills as a storyteller, which combined different elements to create a convincing story, seem to me just remarkable, because it is hard to believe that humiliation would be the real motivation behind his actions. In any case, it is true that the Fugger family had a person working for them in that town. Nevertheless, when he describes him as 'fat, bachelor, and red', although maybe he just meant that he had red hair, he seems to depict him as the villain of the story. The colour had negative connotations, as did the fact that he was still a bachelor in his forties or fifties. In addition, this final piece of information seems not to be true, as it is known that at least he had offspring (García Colorado 2016).

He then continues the story by saying how 'llegado a Sigüenza compró una vara larga de alguazil y hizo un borrador de una provisión que dezía nos los Inquisidores contra la herética pravedad e apostasía, mandamos a vos Felipe de Estrada pues vais a la ciudad de

⁴⁵ AHN, Inq., leg. 200, exp. 21, n.p. (she was born in Bustarviejo and there she grew up in her parents' house, carrying bundles of firewood and making a living in great poverty to support her mother, because her father died eleven years ago, and she has never left the said place).

⁴⁶ AHN, Inq., leg. 76, exp. 6, 148r and ff. (since those Germans robbed and caused him such humiliation, he swore that he would take revenge on them and take the heart out of one of them and it eat him if he could).

Almagro y prendáis el cuerpo de Juan Gelvez y preso y a recaudo lo traygais a esta casa de la Inquisición'.⁴⁷ The charges against him now depended on the confession through which he provided the Inquisitors with what they needed. That is why these stories became an intentional or unintentional trap for the accused. However, as in this case, while acknowledging what they had done, the defendants were trying to justify their sins through a convincing and seductive story. On the other hand, if the Inquisitors had what they needed, why did they allow Francisco to keep telling such a long story?

After falsifying the document, Francisco goes on to narrate in detail how he convinced people from town to town to help him arrest Juan Gélvez. He recruits a man in Ciudad Real whose name he does not remember, but 'era de mediana estatura barbinegro y tenía un caballo blanco y este le dixo pues si le podía acompañar a prender un hombre por el santo officio y él le respondió pues sí por cierto'.⁴⁸ In the town of Daimiel, he even managed to recruit the representative of the Inquisition – or *familiar* – in the town. On arriving in Almadén, he went to the house of the *corregidor* (Mayor) and enlisted another person 'que es un hombre flaco, enfermo de los ojos de çinquenta hasta sesenta años y él le dixo como este declarante yba a prender a Juan Geldez y él se maravilló mucho y al fin dixo pues yría a acompañarle'.⁴⁹ When I find all these descriptions and other intricate details, I always wonder whether that amount of information was explicitly required. However, the exact question was not recorded. In any event, the story of how Francisco manages to recruit all those people, convincing some for money, and others thanks to the air of authority imparted by the false document – the order – he drafted (it totals some 2200 words) has all the elements of a compelling narrative. Indeed, it reminds me of some kind of scam film such as *The Sting* or *Ocean's Eleven*. Nevertheless, one of the most common elements of these stories is how the narrators manage to keep talking, trying to give the impression of collaborating, but in reality, without telling the officials anything new. Therefore, they never remember the names of accomplices, or when they did it turns out that they were all dead or far away from the reach of Inquisition, which is reminiscent of what, as already mentioned, Scott calls the 'arts of resistance. Of course, many times the situation changed when they were tortured. But until that point, they tried to resist in very subtle ways. That is why Francisco did not remember the names of any of those who helped him, except Benito Hernández, the *familiar* of the Inquisition, who accepted the mission 'si le pagaba su sueldo, que era un ducado cada día'.⁵⁰

When they – he, the aforementioned *corregidor*, the alcaide his nephew, Benito Hernández and the other man from Ciudad Real – arrived at the house of Juan Gélvez, 'este llebaba vestidos una cadena de oro y una ropa larga de damasco pardo y un sombrero',⁵¹ Gélvez asked him what letters or orders he had from Rome, and Bastida replied that 'que no tenía cartas ni otros recaudos sino los de su magestad'.⁵² And asking where the money was, they showed him a chest with more than fifty or sixty thousand ducats, and Bastida requested from them one thousand which were

⁴⁷ AHN, Inq., leg. 76, exp. 6, 184r and ff. (upon arriving Sigüenza he bought a long constable's staff and drafted a provision, that said: 'We, the inquisitors against the heretical depravity and apostasy, order you, Felipe de Estrada [he had changed his name], to seize the body of Juan Gélvez, and bring him prisoner to the Inquisition').

⁴⁸ AHN, Inq., leg. 76, exp. 6, n.p. (he was of medium height with a black beard and a white horse, and he asked him if he could accompany him to arrest a man for the Holy Office and he answered that he certainly could).

⁴⁹ AHN, Inq., leg. 76, exp. 6, n.p. (who is a skinny man, with an eye disease, fifty or sixty years old, who, finding out that they were going to arrest Juan Gélvez, was amazed but finally said he would go with them).

⁵⁰ AHN, Inq. leg. 76, exp. 6, 184r and ff. (if he was paid his salary, which was a ducat per day).

⁵¹ ANH, Inq., leg. 76, exp. 6, n.p. (he was wearing a gold chain and long brown damask clothing and a hat).

⁵² *Ibid.* (he did not bring letters or other documents except those of His Majesty).

needed to pay his expenses. Was he implying that he had been honest because he could have taken all the money? In any case, he claimed that part of that sum was to pay the salaries of the familiar and the servant he had also employed. Finally, he arrived in Madrid, where he managed to find someone who, in exchange for ‘una escritura’ (an affidavit), remained guarding the prisoner. The story continues although it becomes more and more confusing until it is interrupted with the question of what he planned to do then in the city, the answer to which is even more confusing. Lastly, we do not know how the story ends or how Bastida was discovered or even arrested because none of that information is included. However, the entire narrative is a good example of some of the more fascinating aspects of these stories, a fascination which they maintained until the end.

5. Conclusion

These sources are as fascinating as they are misleading, especially because it is hard to identify the origin of some of their elements. First, it is hard to know whether the information given was provided willingly by the narrators or whether it was required of them. Likewise, one never knows whether certain features derive from the format imposed by the interrogators, or whether the format derived from the more general autobiographical culture. Everything is intermingled in the final document. At the same time, such texts look as if they could bring us the voices of the past, and while that is partially true, one should be aware that they followed certain rules and were subject to certain limitations. However, trying to analyze them is well worth the effort. The lives of their protagonists are fascinating as well. If what Francisco de la Bastida recounted is true, how could a twenty-year-old boy do such things? How could he convince those people and kidnap one of the most powerful men in the area? And if what he said is untrue, how did he have the courage or desperation to make up a story like that in those circumstances? Such examples prove clearly that defendants were not as helpless as we might think. They also demonstrate that an opportunity appeared when they were asked to tell their life stories, and that many defendants took advantage as best they could. In so doing they put to work their legal and doctrinal knowledge, along with their narrative and persuasive powers and skills in a performance intended to seduce their audience. And precisely for this reason, we – as readers in the twenty-first century – must be careful to avoid being seduced by these captivating stories. Otherwise, we run the risk of losing whatever objective judgment we possess.

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'Becoming' Subalterns Writing and Scribbling in Early Modern Prisons

Anna Clara Basilicò
University of Padua/Ca' Foscari University of Venice
(annaclara.basilico@unive.it)

Abstract

According to Spivak, the subaltern was 'removed from all lines of social mobility' (2004, 531), deprived of their capacity to speak and excluded from representation in both political and aesthetic senses. Such a condition is necessarily subject to sovereign temporality, thus historically determined and rooted. The marginalization is determined through three main lines of oppression – race, gender and class –, whose persistence in time is ineludible. But what happens when new circumstances are introduced and intervene, resulting in a condition of subalternity for a hitherto non-subaltern subject? The essay addresses the issue by considering the experience of early modern imprisonment in Italy through a reading of prison graffiti, viewing confinement as a condition of temporary subalternity. In the light of these premises, the essay addresses graffiti as a potential form of subaltern writing, examining two case studies from Palazzo Steri, the inquisitorial prison in Palermo (1604-1782).

Keywords: Graffiti, Gramsci, Inquisition, Prison History, Subaltern Studies

1. *Introduction*

After several years spent studying historical graffiti, more specifically, inquisitorial prison graffiti, I found myself questioning the common perception of graffiti as subaltern writing that emerges in public discourse (Basilicò 2023a). The application of the materialistic approach of Armando Petrucci to the graffiti of Palazzo Steri, used as the Inquisition prison in Palermo from 1604 to 1782, led me to take this form of graphic production as an exercise on the part of the victims of the Holy Office, whose condition could rightly be defined as one of subalternity. In contrast with the praxis of coeval secular prisons, the Holy Office did not make any distinction of class, confining in the same cell intellectuals, millers, slaves and merchants. We know this from the information about social relations between prisoners that is annotated in archival records. Nevertheless, on the walls of Palazzo

Steri, I could only spot the words of some of them. How is that Agueda Azzolini,¹ Baharàm,² Zara,³ sor Juana Rosselli,⁴ Arabia,⁵ Hamete⁶ cannot be associated with any of the graffiti? The perhaps obvious idea of relativity as a prerogative of subalternity conflicted with both the idea of subaltern as a collective body and as singularity. Could the world ‘subaltern’ be accompanied with adverbs such as *more* or *less*? I struggled to find a way out of the idea of subalternity as a social product of hegemony, roughly wondering whether ‘“popular culture exists outside the act that suppresses it”’ (Ginzburg 1992, xvii) – even though I do not agree with using ‘popular’ as a synonym of ‘subaltern’. I must admit that it was not scholarly literature that persuaded me of the contrary, but a fortunate encounter with the *jineoloji*, the science of women as described by the Kurdish women’s movement (Güneşer 2021). Thus, assuming for the subaltern an existence other than that defined by its contrary – and what defines its contrary? –, the problems relied on the ‘epistemological availability of subalternity’ (Warrior 2011, 86). This contribution aims to address the issue by comparing two different approaches towards subalternity – namely Antonio Gramsci’s legacy and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s formulation – and to show the lines of continuity between them.

2. *Scattered Speculations on Subalternity*

In an interview published in the appendix of *The Postcolonial Gramsci* (Srivastava and Bhattacharya 2012, 221-232), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak described a ‘certain dilution’ (221)⁷ of the word ‘subaltern’ ensuing from her attempt to ‘make the work of Subaltern Studies more easily accessible’ (*ibid.*). As a result, ‘subaltern became a claim to a certain kind of undifferentiated victimage ... “subaltern is anybody who feels inferior”’ (221-222). This is far removed from her actual interpretation, which I will try to summarize for the benefit of my argument on prison graffiti and subaltern writings.

The broad literature produced by Spivak provides the scholar with at least three features of the subaltern: *s/he*⁸ cannot speak, cannot be heard and is being silenced. She speaks of subaltern as ‘those removed from lines of social mobility’ (2004, 531), situated in a ‘position without identity’ where ‘social lines of mobility, being elsewhere, do not permit the formation of a recognizable basis of action’ (2005, 476). The subaltern does not have consciousness of their condition, from which Spivak derives the difference between subalternity and class (*ibid.*). *S/he* occupies a place excluded from representation in both political and aesthetic senses, is a non-agent and a non-subject. What rightly seems to characterize the subaltern is the privation, the negation, insofar as the only possibility to define subalternity is *via negativa*. This is why, addressing historiography, Spivak feels the urge (and invitation) to read the silences of history, to measure them, instead of striving to find records. Such a statement might recall Foucault’s archaeology of silence (1961, ii), or even Le Roy Ladurie’s area of cultural silence (1978, 189), but Spivak’s outcomes substantially differ from both, rejecting both Foucault’s aesthetic attitude

¹ AHN (Archivo Histórico Nacional), Inquisición, 1747, exp. 3; AHN, Inquisición, 1746, exp. 32.

² AHN, Inquisición, 1747, exp. 5.

³ AHN, Inquisición, 1747, exp. 22.

⁴ AHN, Inquisición, 1748, exp. 16.

⁵ AHN, Inquisición, 1748, exp. 25.

⁶ AHN, Inquisición, 1748, exp. 19.

⁷ A similar premise was set out in Castillo Gómez 2002, 23.

⁸ The formula ‘*s/he*’ is the one adopted by Spivak to exclude the use of the male universal.

and the process of information retrieval as possible solutions to uncover the subaltern presence throughout history. For Spivak, one must assume the subaltern's speech to be essentially inaudible and illegible for those who 'achieved' the space produced by patriarchy.⁹ Reporting the story of Bhuvanewari Bhaduri, a young woman who hanged herself in Calcutta in 1926, Spivak demonstrated the extent to which historical circumstances and ideological structures colluded to remove any chance of her being heard (1988, 307-308). Shortly afterwards, she concludes her essay by stating that the 'subaltern cannot speak' (308). Subalternity is thus the structurally imposed position from which it is impossible to access the capacity to take power, substantially differing from the possibility adumbrated by Gramsci.¹⁰ If a subaltern escapes from this muting, then s/he ceases to be a subaltern – which is obviously a desirable switch. The sole act of speaking implies the shift from subalternity to something else, being thus the act of a *former* subaltern. At this point, she is not too distant from Gramsci's position, whereby 'when the subaltern becomes leader and is in charge ... there will be a revision of a whole mode of thinking because the mode of existence will have changed'.¹¹ This is the most controversial argument, the already mentioned 'epistemological availability' of the subalterns. Luckily (for me), in her copious production, Spivak slightly mitigated her position, rowing back on this. 'I said in a very violent and enraged rhetorical voice "The subaltern cannot speak"', she admits, but 'that is not to be taken as an expository sentence' (2014, 11). She eventually rejects the 'totalizing character ascribed to the condition of subalternity' (de Jong and Mascot 2016, 723) and it becomes a sort of space of transition between agency and non-agency, a fluid, temporary condition.¹² The liminal rite seems to be the shift from a locutionary act to an interlocution, which according to Vahabzadeh might, under specific circumstances, lead to the 'hegemonization of the subaltern-turned-subject' (2007, 110).

The issue of the subaltern as a subject/agent, and not as an object, is preminent in Spivak's discourse. She directly engages historiography, since it seems impossible for the intellectual to elude the fate of 'ventriloquizing' or speaking *for* the subaltern, in fact, of perpetrating a form of epistemic violence.¹³ She proceeds by drawing attention to the act of reading performed by the researcher, whose positioning must thus be questioned and, ultimately, deconstructed with respect to its purpose of unveiling subaltern voices: 'chronicling the popular is not subaltern studies' (2005, 481). On these premises, Roger Chartier's statement about Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* appears to reach different conclusions: for him it was 'entirely permissible to explore, as through a magnifying glass, the way a man of the people can think and use the sparse intellectual elements that reach him from literate culture' (1982, 35). Although the debate prompted by Ginzburg's monograph considered power relations, addressing not only historical

⁹ Here Spivak embraces and refers to a decolonial feminist interpretation of capitalism and the nation-state as the most institutionalized form of patriarchy, with capitalist society being the 'culmination of all the previous exploitative societies' (Güneşer 2021, 37). See also Butler 2006; Öcalan 2015; Dirik 2018.

¹⁰ Notebook (N) 3, paragraph (§) 48 (Gramsci 2011, vol. 2, 48-52). The first edition of Gramsci's *Quaderni del carcere (Prison Notebooks)* was published between 1948 and 1951 under the supervision of Palmiro Togliatti. Although not altered, the text was profoundly rearranged and re-organized. A comprehensive and philological edition was edited in 1975 by Valentino Gerratana and published by Einaudi. To date, a complete translation of the latter edition in English is still missing. In this article, quotes from notebooks 3 and 8 are from the English edition edited by Joseph A. Buttigieg and Antonio Callari (Gramsci 2011 [1992]), while quotes from notebook 11 are from the selection edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (Gramsci 1992).

¹¹ N 8, § 205 (Gramsci 2011, vol. 3, 353).

¹² 'Agency of change is located in the insurgent or the subaltern' (Spivak 2006, 197).

¹³ About the attitude towards the ventriloquization of subalterns in historical records, see Wood 2007, 91-184.

power relations but also historiographic ones, it never included Spivak's arguments. Dominick LaCapra is perhaps the most representative example of this hiatus. He criticizes Ginzburg for failing to explore 'the interaction among the hegemonic culture(s) of dominant classes, popular culture(s), and high culture(s)' (1985, 58) and, later, for supporting methodological elements that could serve to 'reinforce hegemonic relations in professional historiography' (69). At the same time, he discerns the positioning of the author, his emotional identification with the defendant and expresses the limits resulting from this bias (62), but ultimately fails to provide the reader with a valid alternative. For Spivak, the turning point is the shift from the subaltern as the *object* of research to the *subject* to learn from, as the development of Gramsci's understanding of the duality. Deconstructing historiography ultimately means this: to learn how to learn from the subaltern by unlearning the privilege. It is not an easy task, since capitalist modernity has forged a humanity structurally un-provided with tools to unlearn ideology, but this operation is what she calls 'the greatest gift of deconstruction: to question the authority of the investigating subject without paralysing him, persistently transforming conditions of impossibility into possibility' (Spivak 2006, 201).

Therefore, what is the role of the researcher? Not to 'give voices' to the subalterns, which would imply perpetrating the epistemic violence in which they have been confined throughout history. Nor is it to unveil them, or to reallocate the subaltern into the sphere of hegemony, but to allow and learn new languages that are not permeated with patriarchal othering. Languages that overcome the incommensurability between 'the terms of the investigator's analytics and the subaltern as "object" of investigation' (Cherniavsky 2011, 157) and cease using subalternity as a 'terrain of representational maneuver in the production of elite knowledge' (2007, 75). Languages, in fact, that do not estimate the subject/object dichotomy, acknowledging that the first 'always stems from capital and power', while 'the objects are the barbarians, the peoples, and the women excluded from power' (Öcalan 2020, 19).¹⁴ According to Eva Cherniavsky, in the Western context this process begins with a 'political intimacy with the subaltern/South' (2007, 78), the desire to break the epistemological aporia. The choice of the historian is thus a moral fact, crucial to overcome the processes that create and validate subalternity in the present. This shift in mindset also implies a different use of knowledge, which is no longer the instrumental preserve of an elite – a condition that appears to be crucial to Gramsci too. Although, according to Gramsci, subalterns cannot escape subalternity on their own, he does not conceive them as a 'mere thing' and criticizes a certain mechanical determinism that flows into a passive fatalism:¹⁵ the subaltern classes contain the potential autonomy needed to achieve hegemony, which is why making history of the subalterns is a political act, since it means reversing the crumbling of subaltern classes to provide their traces with an inventory, and hence a historical unity.¹⁶ Until then, only the ruling class had been able to unify – the result of such unification happening to be the State –, and so that history coincided with the history of States. This unity can be achieved through discipline and organization, Gramsci says, and 'there is no organization without intellectuals, without organizers and leaders'. But, he adds, 'the process of creating intellectuals is long and difficult'.¹⁷

¹⁴ The *jineoloji* derives from this acknowledgment and discusses a methodological frame for subverting this trend.

¹⁵ N 8, § 205 (Gramsci 2011, vol. 3, 353).

¹⁶ 'Traces' is also the word Gramsci uses to describe the plural temporality that undergoes this process of unification that the intellectual is called upon to help establish (Thomas 2014; Morfino 2020).

¹⁷ N 8, § 169 (Gramsci 2011, vol. 3, 330).

For both Gramsci and Spivak, the outcomes of this process, which entail the deconstruction of hegemonic historiographies, are narratives meant to shape a (potentially) new representation – achieving cultural hegemony. In this operation, it is crucial to deal with who is actually narrating, that is, the historian.¹⁸ The ‘traces’ of Gramscian memory are traces that, as he writes, were deposited copiously by subaltern classes over the course of time, but through which the historian has to navigate without the benefit of an inventory.¹⁹ In this wandering and wondering that we call studying, some historians bumped into a cluster of traces, a lattice of crumbs hoarded at the margins of history. It was the case of Domenico Scandella, concealed for centuries until Carlo Ginzburg encountered him (Ginzburg 1992). I will talk about inquisitorial prison graffiti in due course, but what I am trying to do is to retrace the path that led me to look at them and *re-read* them as subaltern writings. This journey starts precisely from Ginzburg’s work, from his attempt (his will) to dig through Inquisition documents until he captured that cosmogony, that milky chaos, and decided to return it to history no longer harnessed in the succession of the inquisitor’s questions.

3. *On Poor Men and Subalterns*

When reading *The Cheese and the Worms* for the first time, I was enraptured by the possibility of gaining access to a discourse so far excluded from history, and the goal of re-translating written transcripts into orality was fascinating. Nevertheless, the debate over subaltern and post-colonial studies as developed in the following decades slightly changed the premises on which Carlo Ginzburg built his argument.

The first issue to address is the framing of Menocchio as a subaltern. Introducing the miller to readers, Ginzburg reports that, in front of the inquisitors, Menocchio described himself as ‘very poor’ (1992, 1). Soon after, the historian qualifies this statement, showing that the miller’s economic situation was not so catastrophic. His ‘place in the small world of Montereale wasn’t the most negligible’: he had been mayor of the village and administrator of the parish church. He could ‘read, write, and add’, having supposedly attended elementary school (2). He was born in Montereale and he was a man. If we were to take marginalization as a process driven by three main lines of oppression – gender, race, and class (Davis 1981) –, it would appear that Menocchio’s position was not so marginal. He even ‘achieved’, to some extent, the State – to paraphrase Spivak’s quote on Gramsci (Srivastava and Bhattacharya 2012, 222). Can we consider him a subaltern then? Yes, but on the basis of different premises. Ginzburg refers to the Gramscian idea of subalternity as the opposite of the dominant/hegemonic class, considering it as a collective noun, an attribute of a *class*, and not of a person. Spivak, on the other hand, refers to the debate that originated around post-coloniality in the social sciences, considering marginality to be the result of a multi-situated oppression. The two assumptions are only apparently in conflict. In 1982, Adriano Prosperi devoted an essay to the notion of *otras Indias* (1982), later taken up in the volume *Tribunali della coscienza* (1996, 551-599). His analysis traces the emergence of the analogy between the indigenous peoples – encountered in the Americas and the Orient – and the rural communities of the European peripheries as a domination-oriented process. Although his findings might seem to refute the centrality of racial discrimination in marginalization – attesting to the existence of similar inequalities even within the same geographic context –, I

¹⁸ This is also crucial for Ginzburg, who quotes Roman Jakobson on this: ‘Any reported speech is *appropriated* and remolded by the quoter’ (Jakobson 1964, 54, in Ginzburg 1989, 161).

¹⁹ N 11, § 12 (Gramsci 1992, 323-342)

am convinced, on the contrary, that the spread of this label testifies to the historicity of such oppression. The ethnicization of trivialization rests on the establishment of a correlation between racialization and barbarism, and in fact it is not surprising that the most widespread use of these definitions is to be found ‘in the circles most associated with the problems of conquest, the Spanish’ (555). If until then a difference in culture resulted in a difference in nature,²⁰ here it is quite the opposite: it is the difference in nature that results in a difference in culture, where ‘nature’ is defined on the basis of racial and class elements.

One could argue that Menocchio’s participation in the institutional apparatus would remove him from the subaltern classes; but assuming subalternity in relational terms instead of ontological terms, he eventually situates himself within the ‘fundamental’ subaltern classes (Liguori 2015). Should the latter argument also be refuted, what eventually makes him a subaltern is the effect of repression: once incarcerated, he lost the possibility to participate in any space of autonomy. He eventually also lost the possibility to speak, even though his previous ability to speak – and to be heard – is exactly what cost him his life. Ginzburg underlines the prolificity of Menocchio’s speech, relating it to the number of questions that the inquisitor, his vicar, and the mayor of Portogruaro posed to him. Could the confidence of the miller while answering be associated with his previous social role? The status of a ‘poor man’, as he defines himself, distinct from the ‘superiors’, which included the highest religious and political authorities. Although (or perhaps precisely because of) his ‘totally dichotomous view of the class structure’, Menocchio already situates himself among the subalterns before his ideas cost him a charge (Ginzburg 1992, 16).

The second issue appertains to Menocchio’s epistemic availability as an extraordinary case. Ginzburg makes no secret of his exceptionality. Besides, he confirms that it is solely by virtue of that exceptionality that it was possible to draw the genealogical lines of his cosmogony. The same applies for the *benandanti*, whose extraordinariness pushed the Inquisition to dig into their belief system, enabling the historian, centuries later, to breach the judicial veil. Such a stance would seem to collide with Spivak’s warning that ‘to historicize the subaltern is not to write the history of the singular’ (2005, 481), if microhistory was intended as an excuse to focus on miniscule details, and not as ‘an opportunity to subvert pre-existing hierarchies thanks to the intrinsic relevance – demonstrated *a posteriori* – of the object under scrutiny’ (Ginzburg 2013a, 110) that ‘aims at generalization’ (109). But this is not the case. Spivak too, when discussing widow sacrifices (*sati*), talks about a mark of excess as ‘the only form in which something like woman’s agency can be apprehended’ (Morris 2010, 6).²¹ Ginzburg knows then that this extra-ordinary nature makes it impossible to use Menocchio as the average common man of his time; he is aware that his work runs the risk of falling into the *histoire événementielle*, but he still engages with the idea of the history of subaltern classes ‘only ... accomplished through “numbers and anonymity”, by means of demography and sociology, “the quantitative study of past societies”’ (1992, xx).²²

4. *Can the Subaltern Write?*

What does this long introduction have to do with graffiti? I tried to summarize the debate on subalternity and subalternity prerogatives and to briefly apply it to a well-known case study

²⁰ In this regard, Luther’s judgement of the Saxon peasants is merciless: ‘they live like dumb brutes and irrational hogs’ (Wengert 2017, 213).

²¹ This argument has been taken further by Li, according to whom ‘in death, the subaltern is perfected as a concept so pure no living referent can contradict or complicate it’ (2009, 276).

²² Ginzburg is quoting from Furet 1963 (Ginzburg 1992, xx).

such as *The Cheese and the Worms* before exploring the actual case study. Indeed, Ginzburg's methodology has also been widely studied by the Subaltern Studies collective as it recurred to sources provided by hegemonic institutions – one of the many cases of 'asymmetric ignorance' (Chakrabarty 1992, 2 and 2000, 28). The same does not apply to early modern graffiti, making this long introduction necessary to make some points that will return in the following analysis of the writings left on the walls of Palazzo Steri.

Prison graffiti should not be considered a representative sample of prison writings in general: the Steri served as an inquisitorial prison for people accused of behaving against the Christian faith.²³ Graffiti represent a palimpsest: walls were periodically plastered. Thus, the scholar has access either to the latest graphic landscape or to a miscellany of graffiti from different periods, depicted on the same plane arbitrarily brought to light through restoration. Additionally, graffiti have limited durability: the scripts were sketched with poor materials and were prone to deterioration. How many writings have disappeared over the centuries? Insofar as scholars have studied the phenomenon, they have focused mainly on written graffiti, whereas walls are also covered with sketches, marks and scratches. Restricting the analysis to written forms involves focusing on those prisoners who had a certain degree of literacy. Within this group, the gender ratio was noticeable. A fascinating study, although somewhat dated, published in 1978 by Marie-Christine Rodriguez and Bartolomé Bennassar on the cultural level of the witnesses and the defendants investigated by the Holy Office in Toledo and Córdoba shows that the male illiteracy rate was 47.3 percent, while the female rate was 95.9 percent (25). Besides, the religious schools of the Counter-Reformation for the lowest strata of the population favoured the teaching of reading rather than the practice of writing, which means that the latter ability was even rarer.²⁴ Essentially, when looking at written graffiti in Inquisition prisons, one is looking at the graphic production of a limited sample of prisoners, all of whom were men – which answers the question posed at the beginning about the absence on these walls of signs attributable to other social groups.²⁵ Although the Sicilian Inquisition prosecuted several *moriscos* who fled from Spain between 1609 and 1614 after the expulsion edict, there is only one script in Spanish and none in Arabic. According to Maria Sofia Messana, the Holy Office convened at least 846 trials against renegades between 1500 and 1782, and only 34 percent of the defendants were Italians. The others were Spaniards, Portuguese, French, British, Germans, Hungarians, Romanians, Poles, Russians, Greeks, Turks, Maltese, Cypriots, Barbarians, Africans, Indians, Asians, Bulgarians, Dalmatians, Tunisians, Armenians and Dutch (2012, 175-176). Still, except for a few graffiti in English left by John Andrews, none of the other languages appear on the walls, which further narrows the sample size of the incarcerated people to whom we have access.

In the light of this long premise, the question that arises is: should prison graffiti be considered a form of subaltern writing? To answer this question, it is necessary to answer another: can the subaltern write? Based on the evidence and on the history of literacy, the answer is no. The subaltern could not write. Women, marginal subaltern classes²⁶ and racialized prisoners were structurally excluded from this practice. 'The world of illiterate people in a written culture' is a huge, blurred field, difficult to deal with and to study (Petrucci 1978, 464). Yet, I assume nobody

²³ The Steri was also used for *familiars* (non-ecclesiastical employees of the Holy Office).

²⁴ See Petrucci 1978, 460. In particular, the author frames this praxis as driven by the dominant classes' aim to impose and maintain ideological and social control over subalterns through the mechanisms of the educational system.

²⁵ The absence of any script attributable to women is due to the permanent alteration of the building that housed their cells.

²⁶ As such, in Gramscian terms, essentially different from the fundamental subaltern classes (see Liguori 2015).

would consider prisoners writing on an early-modern prison wall to be enduring a condition other than that of subalternity, which is in fact right, since incarcerated people are excluded, by definition, from society. ‘Carcer a coercendo, quod exire prohibentur’ argued Varro in the fifth book of *De lingua latina*, associating the etymology of carcer, prison, with the verb coercere, to restrain, ‘because those who are in it are prevented from getting out’. Prisoners were physically removed from the spaces of social agency and confined in the heterotopias of deviation, that is ‘the places that operate at the margins of society, in the desolate shores that surround it’ (Foucault 2014, 69), wherein ‘individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed’ (1986, 25). Continuing the assessment, it follows that the material ability to write should also be distinguished from ‘the ability and the possibility to actively intervene in the development of written culture’ (Castillo Gómez 2022, 158).²⁷ The answer to the question ‘can the subaltern write?’ would therefore be negative not only because of the socio-political phenomenon of illiteracy, but also because the ability to write, if not accompanied by the effective possibility to interfere with material processes, is in fact ineffectual. Yet, this inference should not deter us from investigating prison graffiti by considering the categories of subalternity, nor should it lead to the conclusion that the subaltern is ontologically unknowable.

This argument might benefit from a distinction between a pre-existing condition of subalternity and the condition of those who, as members of the hegemonic class, experienced an abrupt change of status due to incarceration. As previously shown, those are the ones who mainly wrote on the cell walls and their writings provide a glimpse of the result of this change of status. This shift corresponds to the transition between agency and non-agency described by Spivak, the oscillation that allows the scholar to access the subaltern as a historical subject. Moreover, considering the small number of surviving graffiti and the ratio of literate to illiterate prisoners, the specimen available today is a ‘segment of exception’, confirming Ginzburg’s argument on exceptionality as a device to historicize the subaltern. But what happens to all those people who were incarcerated by the Holy Office and were nothing but ‘ordinary’ in their subalternity? Those whose irrelevance in the face of the hegemonic structures of power determined their absence from any historical discourse? These people did not write in prison, nor could they. But must one assume that they were not marking the walls in any way? The answer is no. But as Maartje van Gelder and Filippo de Vivo put it, ‘if the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, then what is it evidence of?’ (2023, 45). In this regard, Elizabeth Hoak-Doering, artist and scholar, suggests on the one hand the need to address this ‘blankness’ (2010, 91) – it being the *a priori* absence of the graphic act, its *a posteriori* erasure though whitewashing, or the expunction operated by the researcher who does not take it into account –, and on the other hand to adopt ‘intentionality’ as a theoretical framework to look at informal inscriptions.²⁸

5. *On the Use of Prison Graffiti as Sources*

The number of studies on graffiti has grown significantly in the last few decades, developing around three main approaches. Historical research tends to focus on documentary inscriptions (the most extraordinary, in fact), or to analyse those attributable to a known prisoner. In these cases, graffiti are either the starting point of a survey – because they contain a name

²⁷ Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

²⁸ In this regard, I am very much looking forward to her doctoral dissertation, to be discussed at the Humbolt University of Berlin: *Intentions through hands and time: a framework for analyzing informal inscriptions on ancient objects and surfaces*.

perhaps, or a reference to a relevant historical fact –, or a frill to research that has already been conducted to confirm what emerged from the archives.²⁹ On the other hand, Armando Petrucci, along with the attention devoted to the social, political and cultural context of the scripts, paved the way for the development of an epigraphic and palaeographic interest in the matter.³⁰ Partially as an adjunct to this second approach, a third methodological framework, closer to anthropology and ethnology, has developed, especially in the French context.³¹ As a result of these studies, at the beginning of the twenty-first century a fourth approach emerged, related to the issue of graffiti conservation and musealization.³² The emergence of this topic demonstrates the positive impact of previous studies on the matter.

Graffiti, in a broader sense, throw up some methodological issues that have not been entirely solved, as evidenced by the epistemological premises of even the most recent contributions. The debate on the subject dwells mainly on the 'criteria of epigraphic-ness', currently identified as legibility, publicity and visibility (Petrucci 1985; Corbier 1987; Fraenkel 1994). In this paradigm, graffiti – especially prison graffiti – pose several difficulties. Luisa Miglio and Carlo Tedeschi suggest considering (some of) them as hidden writings, as opposed to 'exposed writings' (Petrucci 1985) – others speak of 'intimate writing' (Petitjean 2018, 32) – highlighting the problems connected to the criterion of publicity. Was all prison graffiti meant to be read? If yes, by who? Véronique Plesch (2018) hypothesizes, in places of confinement, a movement from the community to the individual, a self-referential statement that contradicts the principles of readability and publicity. According to Béatrice Fraenkel, the answer depends on the nature of the speech/writing act behind the scripts (1994 and 2018). The anthropological approach interrogates the human-environment interaction: a relationship that, within the *milieu carcérale*, takes on a deeper significance (Sanchez 2018). 'Despite the classifying effort of the scholars ... the very nature of the graffiti prevents an exhaustive cataloguing of every single piece of evidence', Miglio and Tedeschi (2012, 615) conclude, and indeed it is not possible to look at graffiti through the usual lens of an epigraphic survey. What are the characteristics of these epigraphic landscapes? Was there a pattern to filling the space? What were the norms? These are unresolved issues that call into question the Lombrosian definition of 'palimpsests': if the hypothesis of a coherent development of inscriptions were to be verified, would it still make sense to speak of a palimpsest? Or would it be more consistent to reason about a rhizomatic development (Petitjean 2018, 27)?

The spatial dimension of graffiti tends to be neglected. Most of the surveys on sites with large amounts of graffiti provide a map of these signs, but they fail to examine the potential implications of position. David Zbiral and Robert Shaw recently published an article on the ongoing Dissident Networks Project (DISSINET), juxtaposing the exceptionality sought by Ginzburg to a 'serial complexity'. The aim of their research is to implement 'a serial and computer-assisted approach to data collection capable of capturing every aspect of relational information within the text', in order to 'capture patterns of relations between ... persons, groups, places, objects, events, and concepts' (Zbiral and Shaw 2022, 13). Such an approach is designed

²⁹ See, for instance, Messana 2007; Fiume 2018 and 2021; García-Arenal 2018; Sarti 2020.

³⁰ See, for instance, Petrucci 1986; Gimeno Blay 1997; Fleming 2001; Castillo Gómez 2006, 2018 and 2022; De Rubéis 2009; Miglio and Tedeschi 2012; Giovè Marchioli 2012; Palmer 2016; Foti 2023.

³¹ See, for instance, Fraenkel 1994 and 2018; Candau and Hameau 2004; Gándara 2010; Plesch 2018; Petitjean 2018; Sanchez 2018.

³² See, for instance, Benavente *et al.* 2004 and the outcomes of the Erasmus+ program *GAP – Graffiti Art in Prison* (2021-2023).

to overcome the biases of a study of the medieval Inquisition conducted through inquisitorial records. Zbiral and Shaw pay particular attention to the relational data dimension. In Palermo, a prisoner drew on the walls of the Steri a detailed map of Sicily, which is still visible. Above it, he left a caption inviting *coi l'ha memoria*, 'those who have memory of it', to add missing cities and villages. There are scripts in the corners of other cartouches, embedded between previous writings and sketches. Later additions, images copied in different cells. These interactions suggest the bidimensional surface of walls as a space produced by prisoners, as an interface. There are quotes from classical and late-antique texts, biblical excerpts, liturgical passages, traces from the cultural past of the writers together with pictures of saints, Christian symbols, paintings of cities and buildings, human figures, animals, flowers and historical scenes belonging to the visual memory of prisoners. The approach explored by DISSINET might serve to disentangle this seemingly unconnected – and yet closely connected – information.

6. *Self-representation*

In the wake of Petrucci's approach, I would like to dwell on the fundamental questions of 'who was writing and why' (1991, 315) on the cells of Palazzo Steri in Palermo. The answer to the first question, at least in a broader sense and as far as it emerged, is literate Sicilian men. The reasons for writing, on the other hand, might be explored by detecting the different attitudes on the wall. One of these pertains to self-representation: how did prisoners describe and represent themselves on the walls?

Cell no. 7 on the ground floor has four *cansuni*, four Sicilian octaves, which are quite relevant from this point of view. The first reads as follows:

O tu chi trasi in chisti orendi abbisi
 undio chinto dielo ardo di foco
 e in menzo un umbra di pirpetua echrissi
 stanco ne lotiu e no ritrovo locu
 lei sti versi chi iu di sango schrissi
 misiru di furtuna stratiu e giocu
 naviri fidi alli toi senza stissi
 c'assai fa cui fa nenti: effida poco.³³

The script appears in the upper left corner of the wall, beyond the height reachable by a man on tiptoe. The text is justified along the left margin, the font size is fairly uniform, and the baselines are fairly regular. Introducing himself, the author states that he is 'burning with fire' whilst in the frost. An evident contradiction. Not far away, on the same wall, there is a second script attributable to the same prisoner. The state of preservation does not allow a full reading of the text, but the lines that are still legible read 'Caudu e fridu sentu ca mi pigla / la terzuri tremu li vudella / lu cori e lalma n'assuttigla'.³⁴ The coexistence of discordant thermal sensations in this case is attributed to the symptoms of tertian fever, or malaria, which causes swings in body temperature. Renato Malta and Alfredo Salerno, affiliated to the Department

³³ (Thou who enter these horrid chasms / where I, here in the frost, burn with fire / and amid the shadow of perpetual eclipse / I am weary in idleness and find no place, / thou who read these verses I wrote with blood, / unhappy by fate, wrench, and play, / trust not your own senses, / For much does he who does nothing: trust little).

³⁴ (I feel hot and cold, it grasps me / the tertian fever, my guts shake, / my heart and soul are fading).

of Biopathology and Medical Biotechnology at the University of Palermo, have tried to read traces of the prisoners' anatomical and medical skills in the Steri graffiti. According to Malta and Salerno, in the second graffiti the prisoner was comparing the fear of burning with the feelings of a malarial attack, since somehow, they managed to read the fourth line of the text adding 'sentu sunari la campanella'. They hence associated the sound with the 'bell that followed the procession that accompanied the released to the stake' and assumed the author to be a woman (Malta and Salerno 2007, 601).³⁵ Although some of the evidence contradicts their results, their approach is indeed interesting. In fact, the documents collected in the State Archive of Palermo (ASPa), albeit recording the medical expenditure of each prisoner, do not mention symptoms, diagnoses or treatments other than a sporadic variation of diet. Thus, the question that arises from these verses – whether the author actually contracted malarial fever in prison and chose to use the physical sensations experienced to describe the confinement – goes unanswered.

The octaves were written by Michele Moraschino, a nobleman, poet and renowned literate (Sanclemente 1653, 285; Mongitore 1714, 78-79; Auria 1869, 131). Imprisoned on 15 August 1630, for 'haver tenido escritos y libros proybidos, de haver hecho el crescite et multiplicamini y de esto ultimo sin haver contestado Garrano',³⁶ his accomplice, Moraschino spent three years in prison. According to Bernardo Luis Cotoner, the visitor sent by the Suprema and General Inquisition from Madrid to Palermo, Moraschino was charged despite a lack of evidence and imprisoned with 'tanta publicidad y infamia'.³⁷ The idea of mortification recurs several times in Cotoner's reports. According to a list of proceedings annotated by the visitor, a year and a half after Moraschino's arrest, on 31 January 1632, Giuseppe di Roberto testified to the Inquisitor Martín Real that a third man, Battista Cutroba, had told him that 'un moro le havia dicho que el reo [*scil.* Moraschino] havia ydo a Monte Peligo a buscar un thessoro y que se havia llevado con sigo a un pagano el qual havia de nefandar tres veces para hallarlo y que solo le nefandò una'.³⁸ The accusation of sodomy did not fall upon deaf ears and on 10 March 1632 the local inquisitor Juan de Torrecilla summoned and interrogated Cutroba, who nevertheless replied 'que no savia tal cosa',³⁹ that he did not know any such thing. The inquisitor dismissed the accusation, declaring that 'no era justo se embaracasse al reo',⁴⁰ to whom, according to Cotoner, sufficient damage had already been done 'en la profession y hacienda' thanks to Real's harassment.⁴¹ The injustice of the circumstances, stressed and amplified in the document, should not mislead the reader, since Cotoner's visit was aimed at collecting documentation to file a case against Martín Real. After

³⁵ (I hear the bell ringing).

³⁶ AHN, Inquisición, 1754, exp. 14, 24v. (having had writings and books forbidden, having done the *crescite* and *multiplicamini* and, in this regard, having done it without opposing Garrano). According to two witnesses, Moraschino borrowed and transcribed the *Clavicula Salomonis* and the treatise *De Insomniis* by Artemidorus Daldianus, while another witness accused him of participating in an orgiastic ritual organized by twenty-eight-year-old Ludovico Garrano, also on trial. Moraschino allegedly went with fifteen other men 'en un magazín fuera de la puerta de la ciudad de Palermo a hacer al *crescite* y *multiplicamini*' (in a warehouse outside the city gate of Palermo to do the *crescite* and *multiplicamini*) and went 'buscar quince mujeres y ... haciendo un raconamiento se mataban las lucis y cada uno tomava la suia' (looking for fifteen women and ... convincing them with reasoning, the lights would be turned off and each one would take their woman).

³⁷ AHN, Inquisición, 1754, exp. 14, 23v. (with great publicity and infamy).

³⁸ AHN, Inquisición, 1754, exp. 14, f. 25r. (A Moor had told him that the prisoner [*scil.* Moraschino] had gone to Mount Pellegrino to look for a treasure, and that he had taken with him a pagan who he had to defile three times to find it, and that he only defiled him once).

³⁹ AHN, Inquisición, 1754, exp. 14, 25r.

⁴⁰ AHN, Inquisición, 1754, exp. 14, 25r (It was not right to embarrass the defendant).

⁴¹ AHN, Inquisición, 1754, exp. 14, 25v. (sufficient damage had already been done to the profession and the property).

the discovery of his name on the walls, several scholars conducted research into his judicial affairs (see Civale 2017, 288-290; García-Arenal 2018, 60-63; Fiume 2021, 252-253 and 295-297.).

Going back to the dichotomy of hot and cold described by the poet, the motif of burning with fire is a common stylistic feature of love poetry that occurs quite often in Moraschino's poetry.⁴² The juxtaposition of fire with ice, on the contrary, appears only one time in his surviving corpus: 'Morsi pr'amuri to 'ntra focu e ielu'.⁴³ The number of occurrences increases significantly if one considers the most important exponent of Sicilian Petrarchism, Antonio Veneziano, to whose poetic production Moraschino owed a great deal.⁴⁴ Veneziano lived an adventurous and stormy life and experienced prison on more than one occasion. In 1578, he embarked for Spain, but the ship was attacked by Algerian pirates and he was taken prisoner. Jailed in Algeria, he met Cervantes, who later wrote twelve octaves praising his poem, 'Celia'. In Sicily, he was imprisoned in Castellammare in 1567-1568, on charges of murder, and again in 1588 and 1593 following a complaint that led to the discovery of placards against the viceroy in his dwellings. The latter imprisonment was fatal, as during his stay the powder magazines of the fort caught fire, causing a violent blaze in which he died together with dozens of prisoners and guards. He was a member of the 'Accademia degli Accesi' – the precursor of the seventeenth-century 'Accademia degli Accesi', which numbered many intellectuals persecuted by the Inquisition, including Michele Moraschino. Among Veneziano's octaves, the motif of fire and frost recurs explicitly in at least seven octaves.⁴⁵ Among the *canzonistica* school, this parallel occurs once in Cesare Gravina⁴⁶, Mario Migliaccio⁴⁷, Giovanni Di Michele⁴⁸ and an unidentified poet.⁴⁹ Therefore, when writing 'I, here in the frost, burn with fire' on the walls, Moraschino is probably reminiscing about his masters' verses rather than filling the walls in the grip of malaria.

The same remembrance might apply to the formulation 'perpetual eclipse', which also occurs in Veneziano: 'Lu vostru scavu, chi mai vi fu azzettu, / campa, senza di vui, 'n perpetua eclissi'.⁵⁰ The reference to the lack of light lends itself to being addressed in emotional rather

⁴² With reference to the octaves contained in manuscript MS603, stored at the Library of the Musée Condé (Chantilly) and edited by Tobia Zanon, the trope of burning love occurs in Moraschino 2; 3; 4; 8; 14; 15; 20 and 23. The numbering of the octaves follows Zanon 2008, vol. 2, 95-103).

⁴³ Moraschino 21. (I died for your love between fire and frost).

⁴⁴ Moraschino translated Veneziano's poem 'Celia' into Sicilian.

⁴⁵ Veneziano 7; 33; 34; 42; 52; 71; 79 (Zanon 2008, vol. 2, 3-35). The *topos* seems to derive directly from Petrarch; see, in particular, *Canzoniere* 134, l. 2 'e temo, et spero; et ardo, et son un ghiaccio' (and fear, and hope: and burn, and I am ice); 298, l. 3 'et spento 'l foco ove agghiacciando io arsi' (and doused the fire where I, freezing, burned).

⁴⁶ Gravina 29 (Zanon 2008, vol. 2, 76). In addition to the octave collected in MS603, the manuscript H.X.32 stored at the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati of Siena and edited in 1973 by Mariano Fresta contains a collection of Sicilian poems (cc. 47r-92v). Since the heading is missing, it was not possible to attribute the first thirty octaves with certainty, but Fresta guesses it might be Gravina (315). If so, the number of his stanzas mentioning the antonymic pair would be two, since octave no. 19 says 'Ch'arsi friendu in l'amurusu ielu' (I who burned frying in the loving frost). Note that Fresta was not able to identify *friendu* as the gerund of *friiri* (see Traina 1868).

⁴⁷ Migliaccio 24 (Zanon 2008, vol. 2, 153).

⁴⁸ His name is reported only in the manuscript studied by Zanon. Of the seventy-nine octaves attributed to him, several deal with the theme of prison and two also appear on the walls of the Steri (Di Michele 62; 63), suggesting that they were written either by him personally or by someone who was familiar with his work. According to a list of acts of faith, in 1640 a fifty-year-old prisoner called Joan de Miguel/Micheli, accused of blasphemy, abjured *de levi* (AHN, Inquisición, l. 902, 19r., 118v.).

⁴⁹ Autori diversi 23 (Zanon 2008, vol. 2, 197).

⁵⁰ Veneziano 17 (Zanon 2008, vol. 2, 17). (your slave, who was never accepted by you, / lives, without you, in perpetual eclipse). It is also worth noting that in the first cell of the first floor another prisoner with a similar background (Angelo Matteo Bonfante) resorts to the term 'eclipse' in one stanza, but the deterioration of the wall made it impossible to read the line.

than analytical terms. Darkness used to be a constant feature of prison architecture and was specifically willed in a way that we now consider cruel and inhumane. But projecting this sense of injustice produces an amplification of this information, which instead of being correctly attributed to any prison, seems to pertain solely to inquisitorial prisons. Far from blaming this legitimate sense of injustice, I tend to attribute it more to the *leyenda negra's* imaginary (see Lavenia 2013) than to an accomplished critique of Western judicial systems over the past two millennia. The same applies to the composition of the materials used for writing. In this regard, a verse like 'you who read these verses I wrote with blood' is conducive to a pathetic – meaning *pathetikòs* – interpretation: there is no evidence of blood on the walls, nor of other bodily fluids.⁵¹ According to the only available research, graffiti were made with ochre, brick dust – probably obtained from the floor – mixed with watered milk, or charcoal applied with a brush (Mazzeo and Joseph 2005). Besides, archival documents report the presence of ink and colours in the cells, occasionally introduced from the outside⁵² – information reinforced by the presence, in Palermo, of some refined pigments in one cell (5-6). Nevertheless, references to corporeality in these graffiti occur frequently and reveal a certain appetite for the pathetic, somewhat morbid, exaggeration of suffering. The same attitude emerges from the use of definitions such as 'soundless screams' or 'voiceless voices', which transpose a sensory quality attributable to hearing – that of inaudibility – to written words (Pitrè and Sciascia 1999; Fiume 2017). These definitions coproduce an idealized conception of victimization, reinforcing a paradigm in which the victim is weak and blameless (Christie 1986; Wilson and O'Brien 2016). The corresponding narrative showcases prisoners in distress, exposed to constant sorrow, so to meet the requirements of the ideal victims. On the other hand, any attempt to acknowledge the subaltern as historical subject conflicts with the framing of the subaltern as a mere victim, whose alleged passivity has, as its only chance of redemption, the external rescue effected by a subject endowed with agency (Gago 2020).

Thus, what is there in Moraschino's words that describes his self-perception in prison? He chose to write in stanzas, to rely on poetry, rather than simply writing his own name or a few lines in prose. In doing so, he draws on the canons of Sicilian *canzunistica*, adapting *tropoi* and love-related motifs to describe his confinement. He feels inert in there, exhausted by protracted inactivity, by the inability to do anything. Imprisonment implies the impossibility of doing anything materially, but idleness, as an Italian saying goes, tires one out. Mental and physical fatigue is the condition Moraschino is talking about.

7. Signature

In the West, the history of signature as we know it today begins in the sixth century and develops until the sixteenth century. Within this chronological span, the act of signing both replaced the impression of a seal and helped fix the patronymic formula still in use. Béatrice Fraenkel wrote extensively on the 'sign signature' (Fraenkel 1992), describing it as a performative act of writing (2008, 21) whose implications are inevitably of longer duration than a speech act. Her semiotic analysis establishes four main characteristics of signatures: 'the individualizing function of a proper name, the effect of presence of a hand-drawn graphic,

⁵¹ Contrary to Fiume 2018, 100 and 2021, 261.

⁵² In some cases, prisoners purchased it from the guards, who kept the money from the food rations (AHN, Inquisición, 1746, exp. 32, 8v). More in general, the number of autograph memorials given to Bernardo Luis Cotoner, collected in AHN 1757, exp. 20, show that prisoners could ask for and were given paper and ink.

the visual salience of a personal sign and the strength of an act of speech' (17). The person signing is identifying through their name, stating their presence *hic et nunc*, making their presence visible/legible and performing all these implications. In particular, according to Fernando Figueroa Saavedra, the individualizing character of the signature, partially erased during medieval times, re-emerged with the advent of humanism, 'when anthropocentrism allowed individuality to be revalued and the vital perspective to be redirected towards the construction of the personality' (2014, 40).

In the fifteen cells of Palazzo Steri there are only thirteen signatures. The ability to sign, while not a prerogative of the literate population alone, was not yet widespread, and the deteriorating state of the walls may be responsible for the loss of hundreds of names. Nevertheless, compared to other similar prisons, the paucity of signatures is significant. If one considers for instance the prison of the Caetani castle in Sermoneta, the number of names written on the walls is remarkable. In those cells, which were used as inquisitorial, episcopal and military prisons between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century, and as political prisons during the fascist regime, names are the most common writings. The graffiti scratched on the so-called Women's Prison date from 1606 to 1634 (among them, there seems to be a woman's name, Cintia Palazo, although the wording is quite deteriorated and the spelling unsure), when the castle was used by the Holy Office. Comparing two similar records in these two contexts, two different attitudes emerge with regard to revealing one's identity. In Sermoneta, a prisoner wrote:

Io Nardo Ferraro scappel-
 lai una ticella un anno
 carcerato un ora di corda
 - - - - -⁵³

while in Palermo the event of torture is recorded in this way:

A 30 di agosto 1645
 hebbi la tortura.
 A 9 [settem]bri l'hebbi di nuovo.⁵⁴

In both cases, the detainees include a temporal detail, albeit in different ways – one mentions the length of his detention, the other specifies the exact dates – but if the former presents himself with his name, the charge and punishment, the latter conceals all details. This attitude recurs several times in Palermo, where all the references to torture are anonymous. Why this reluctance? Perhaps prisoners were trying to preserve their image, especially if they used to be part of non-subaltern groups before confinement. In Sermoneta, in fact, names are often accompanied by the profession, which suggests a popular background for the prisoner, and the same applies to another Italian prison of the Holy Office, namely that of Narni in Umbria.⁵⁵ Is there a relation between reticence and social class?

⁵³ (I, Nardo Ferraro stole / a pan for one year [I have been] / incarcerated, for one hour [I endured] the strappado / - - - - -).

⁵⁴ (On 30 August 1645 / I was tortured. / On 9 September I was [tortured] again).

⁵⁵ Although no evidence related to torture has emerged in Narni, most of the inscriptions here were made by Giuseppe Andrea Lombardini, who notes on the walls 'Io Giuseppe Antrea Lobartini caporale / fui carcerato [[innocente]] in questo l[uogo] / A ti 4 tecebre 17[59]'. (I, Giuseppe Antrea Lobartini, caporal / was incarcerated [[innocent]] in this p[lace] on 4 December 17[59]).

The case of Angelo Matteo Bonfante seems to suggest so. Incarcerated in May 1645, he spent ten months at the Steri.⁵⁶ In the first cell of the first floor, he left several octaves signed with different pseudonyms such as 'l'infelici', 'lu turmentatu', 'lu meschinu', 'l'abbandunatu'⁵⁷ – recalling the custom of assigning a nickname to members of the academies, often a noun-adjective – and a few lines inviting a future prisoner to face adversity with a cheerful spirit and encouraging him not to blame himself and to have faith in Jesus.⁵⁸ This graffiti was written in Latin, the author having presumably decided to entrust more circumstantial information to an elite language, and not to sign it – which leads to two assumptions. The first is that the prisoner thought that such information could potentially come back to bite him. The second is that he had chosen to share that information solely with well-educated prisoners like himself. Bonfante was detained in at least two cells – as his handwriting also appears in the fifth cell of the first floor, where the same exhortation to avoid self-blaming recurs together with dozens of graffiti signed with the letter *B*.⁵⁹ It has been argued that the signature could have been added by a different prisoner, who associated his initial with the work of somebody else. Given the function and the semiotic value of signing discussed above, I argue instead that the poet of the first cell, the author of the graffiti signed by *B*. and, eventually, of the caption 'D.A.M.B. / pingebat / 1645' were the same person, that is Bonfante. This last inscription was crucial to tracing his identity through the archives. When I got to that graffiti, I felt like I was seeing a sign of meltdown. Perhaps a bit of vanity, perhaps the need to remark his identity, it felt like he made a mistake by revealing something he had so compulsively hidden until then. His attitude changed in the two cells: in both cases, the prisoner hid himself and made his work recognizable, although resorting to pseudonyms that betrayed his membership of a certain social group or to the initial. Bonfante was acquainted with poetry, liturgy and geography (he drew the map of Sicily found on the walls). His verses focus obsessively on pain, and there is no trace of the adaptation of amorous tropes to the theme of prison. The most salient feature, however, was the care he took to sign his writings and drawings to attest his presence in the cells, while hiding his full identity, a sort of attitude towards signing without signing that seems to confirm what was previously suggested.

Michele Moraschino resorted to a similar expedient, concealing his name in a riddle. His cell wall also bears the names of three cellmates: John Andrews, Mahamet/Amet de Brissa (alias Gabriel Tudesco) and Giovanni Battista Guido. Mercedes García-Arenal, who explored the relationship among them at length (2018), relates their incarceration to the development

⁵⁶ ASPa, Tribunale del Santo Uffizio, Carceri, vol. 173, 54. Born in 1604 in Gela (Sicily), he became a member of the 'Accademia dei Riaccesi' in Palermo, and later of the 'Accademia dei Riaccesi' in Messina. According to Antonino Mongitore, he died on 13 September 1676, well after his detention. He was tried for heresy and reconciled in 1646 (AHN, Inquisición, l. 902, 178r-180v), and although the circumstances of his arrest remain unknown, his milieu suggests his trial might have been based on a pretext. The 'Accademia dei Riaccesi' was founded in 1622 with the favour of the Senate, but in 1642 several members left it for the newborn 'Accademia degli Animosi d'Oreto', led by Diego Trasmiera, at that time Inquisitor of Sicily. (see Mongitore 1708, 36; Nigido-Dionisi 1902, 202; Maylender 1929, 430-438; Basilicò 2023b).

⁵⁷ (the unhappy, the tormented, the wretched, the abandoned).

⁵⁸ 'Qui huc ductus reperit in exil[- - -] [- - -] ce[- - -] s[- - -] t ilari animo / sustine lab[ores] hu[- - -] [- - -] f[- - -], quod non es primus / n[e] tu solus consola[- - -] id[- - -] pa [- - -] et imbecilliores te / [- - -] pi[- - -] sti [- - -] p[er] m[- - -] s[- - -] u[- - -] nolite / [- - -] Innocens ne te culpes. In ie[su] d(omi)no / confide et pro[- - -] ora. 1645'. (He who, brought here, finds himself in exile [- - -] faces the labors / with a cheerful soul [- - -] for you are not the first / nor only you comfort [- - -] and more pusillanimous than you / [- - -] do not want / [- - -] Innocent man, do not blame yourself. Trust in Jesus our Lord / and [- - -] 1645).

⁵⁹ 'Innocens noli te culpate / Si culpasti, noli te [ex]cusare / Ve[rum] detege [e]t in d(omi)no / confide'. (Innocent man, do not accuse yourself. If you erred, do not apologize. Seek the truth and trust in God).

of a rebellious, nonconforming identity, which in two out of three cases drew on elements of self-assertion from their native religion. In the upper left corner, there are the initials of the three prisoners: G.A., G.B. G., G.T. Palaeographic analysis suggests they were written by John Andrews, who, nearby, also writes, in full, 'Giovan Andres' and 'Giovan(n)i Bat(tista) Guido', adding a chronological reference: 'an(n)o 1633'⁶⁰ – the same year as Galileo Galilei's trial. Andrews writes extensively on these walls, his name appears often and, of the three, he was the only one able to write, as it emerges from the records that neither Mahamet nor Guido could sign the minutes of their interrogations.⁶¹ Nevertheless, Guido's name occurs at least three times on the wall, supposedly written by himself. In uncertain handwriting, Giovanni Battista Guido writes his first name in the blank spaces left by John Andrews and the other inmates. He had probably copied Andrews' letters (he even annotates 'an(n)o 1633'), and the modern visitor can spot in his attempts the mistakes children still make at school when learning to write. He miswrites the second *n* of his name, drawing the oblique rod ascending instead of descending, he misses the *a*, writing 'Giovni'. Below the signature 'Ioan Andres Ingles of Pasta, an(n)o 1632', he tries also to copy the date, resulting in rotating the number 2 by 90 degrees and flipping it over. What I argue here is that for him, the ability to write his name was of some relevance. We do not know whether he was writing out of boredom or based on a desire for self-determination, but still it was his name that he chose to copy over and over.⁶² Somehow, this reinforces Fraenkel's argument on signature, and the emphasis placed by John Andrews and Giovanni Battista Guido on their names, given their social status, reinforces the connection between class and reticence/proneness. If, however, Andrews' and Guido's names recur frequently on these walls, the same does not apply to Mahamet, who, of the three, suffered the worst fate. He was captured as a child after he ran away from home following an argument with his father, who had whipped him for missing school. He boarded a merchant ship, but it was attacked by the Grand Duke of Florence and he was sold in Messina at the age of seven. For the next two decades he was a slave, brutalised, mutilated, deprived of his name and forced into conversion. Accused of being a Muslim, the Holy Office put him on trial after he attempted to flee from his master with other slaves, and after three lengthy court proceedings he was eventually sentenced to death at the stake.⁶³ Mahamet could not write in either Arabic or Sicilian; his knowledge of the Islamic religion was limited to what he remembered from his early years, while his knowledge of the Christian religion was associated with the forced conversion at the age of eight and with his life as a slave in Sicily. The second trial reports numerous incidents in which Mahamet allegedly lashed out at graffiti in the cell, daubing some pieces and damaging others: his relationship with the sacred images shown on the walls was visceral. According to García-Arenal, his fury was the result of a process of radicalization resulting from detention.

The stories of these four fellow prisoners are representative of a sort of gradualness of subalternity that I described in the first part of this essay. Moraschino received compassion from Cotoner and was acquitted. Andrews was a young 23-year-old from Padstow, an English sailor captured by the Arabs and forced to convert to Islam. Re-captured by a Christian ship, he was

⁶⁰ (year 1633)

⁶¹ AHN, Inquisición, 1754, exp. 20, 232v and 235r.

⁶² At the beginning of the study of prison writings, the approach toward writings like this one was quite different. Without recalling the emotion of Pitre's volume (1940), Carmen Fernández Cuervo, when reading the signature 'Soy Bega' on the Trovador tower in Zaragoza, assumed that 'Bega had felt the desire for someone to one day take an interest in the fact that he had been there' (1966-1967, 226).

⁶³ AHN, Inquisición, 1744, exp. 24.

imprisoned in Palermo and in the cells offered evidence of his Christian, albeit not Catholic, faith. Despite bilateral agreements between Spain and England, his Anglican display on these walls costs him a five-year sentence, at the end of which he had to return to the Steri. Guido, a weaver from Messina, imprisoned for blasphemy, who clashed with Moraschino in prison (and was punished for it, unlike the other party), was sentenced to one hundred lashes, seven years at the oar and to wear the *sambenito* forever. Mahamet, born in Algiers, enslaved at the age of seven and sold to a Catholic master, was accused of apostasy and of being a Muslim. In prison he developed a form of psychosis. After two heavy sentences at the oar, he was tried for the third time and sentenced to be burned at the stake. Among them, the only one who did not try to leave his name on the wall, or to sketch anything on the wall, was Mahamet, who nonetheless still engaged with graffiti. His presence is thus characterized by erasure: his erasure of other's sketches, the absence of his real name, the reduction of his Catholic name in full. Among them, he represents what Gramsci would describe as the marginal subaltern and is closer to subalternity as intended by Spivak. Could he write? No. He was the only one who did not.

However, as already argued, the historian cannot the 'absences' of the past. What the historian can do is to notice those voids, describe them in negative, and go in search of traces. Eventually, traces of Mahamet emerged, and scholars chronicled the last years of his life. At this point, the temptation to compile a sort of *microhistoire événementielle* (in which the prefix *micro* precisely indicates the dimensions, not a discourse on hierarchies) is to be overcome, but the road has been paved.

8. Conclusion

In this essay, I have tried to draw the lines of a concept, that of subalternity, which is far from defined and definitive. I believe that the epistemological knot is the first that needs to be addressed – indeed, I make no claim that my thesis is complete. As Gramsci – and Spivak – argue, if scientific languages were written by hegemonic groups, it follows that such languages were shaped by a biased and ideologically dependent mindset, designed to maintain this hegemony. The question addressed from the beginning was 'can the subaltern write?' and the answer I got was that no subaltern can, and yet *some* subalterns do. Especially in those historical periods when writing was the preserve of a specific social group. The subalterns who can write are pre-eminently those who *have become* subalterns, and who retain this privilege by virtue of their past – and sometimes future – non-subalternity. In these cases, writing is not an indicator of a transition from a condition of subalternity to one of non-subalternity; it is not an emancipatory act, but rather the opposite. It is the trace of a previous privilege that detention does not erase. But this reflection does not come without criticalities, since the assumption of gradualness, of relativity, in subalternity derives from an idea of subtraction from the hegemonic status, which is fixed as the norm, and the normalization of this operation disallows any process of deconstruction. And since writing has historically been a trait of hegemonic groups, in those cases in which the ability to write pertained to former members of these groups, their writings produce an image of detention – that is, the endured condition of subalternity – in line with the dominant narrative. It almost seems as if the structural compatibility of these testimonies originates precisely from the previous hegemonic experience, while at the same time guaranteeing the possibility to escape from the condition of subalternity imposed by prison. The representation Angelo Matteo Bonfante and Michele Moraschino give of themselves on these walls is in line with what one would expect from a prisoner: pain, misery, loneliness, innocence. Is it a coincidence that they both regain their freedom by returning to their lives, even publishing some of the poems

written on these walls? Did adherence to a norm-dictated image play a role in their ability to write? And again, did their ability to write translate into the possibility to write, granting them freedom? I believe so, which is why I argue that *some* subalterns can write. On the other hand, those who entered these cells as subalterns, while in some cases entrusting their words to the walls, suffer different vicissitudes: John Andrews is condemned perhaps by virtue of those very words. What about all the others, all those who did not master graphic signs? They could not write, but this ‘is only the beginning of an answer’, as Ginzburg puts it (Ginzburg 2013b, 131). The rest has yet to be written. It would be wrong to take refuge in the eternal illiteracy of the subaltern classes (Castillo Gómez 2022, 165), since if their incapacity does not entail their absence from the graphic landscape, far less does it entail their absence from history.

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

Teresa Peláez Domínguez
University of València (<teresa.pelaez@uv.es>)

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

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and internal and external violence' (Bertrand and Planas 2011, 3). A complex web of economic, 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 commodities, 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 between 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 underwent 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

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.

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 sutileza 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 impressão a perda da Nao Conceição' (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 não 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 lê' (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

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

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 Não, & 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.

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

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

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 engãchão 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 dependency, 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

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 Christãos, que tinha o banho, que serão oynta, 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 demonstraçoens 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 Christãos, & não se fiaram delles, nem lhe darãr lugar para em algum tempo fugirem, & se reduzirem à Fé Catholica: mas tudo he mentira: porque estes vivem com Mouros, & com Christãos, & menos se pôde 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 pôde 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, &

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 Christãos (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 cruz, 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

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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Writing and Rebellion



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'Unions et germanies' Armed Mobilisation, Plebeian Politicisation and Historical Memory in the Kingdom of Valencia (Fourteenth-Seventeenth Centuries)

Mariana Valeria Parma
University of Buenos Aires (<mparma@filo.uba.ar>)

Abstract

Although the 'Unions et germanies' were forbidden, popular movements arose in the Kingdom of Valencia that expressed themselves mainly through judicial means, but sometimes also resorted to arms. Analysis of the actors' capacity for agency is therefore complex. In particular, the *Germania* (1519-1522) revalued the participation of the urban majorities in public affairs, based on the armed and legal mobilisation of the city's artisans. Other grievances throughout the Kingdom of Valencia strengthened the movement. The conflict was radicalised, giving rise to armed actions against privilege that redefined its trajectory. The classist writings of the chroniclers repudiated this collective violence. The adoption of rational choices to achieve objectives reveals the political subjectivity created by the war, which marked the memory of the commoners. A widespread resistance kept alive their banners, which became the cultural substratum of later struggles. The essay rescues the forms assumed by plebeian political identities in the sixteenth-century conflict, inscribing them in the cycle of collective action that began with the Union (1347-1348) and ended with the *Second Germania* (1693), also comparing the potentialities of these dissimilar experiences.

Keywords: Commoners, Conflicts, *Germania*, Militias, Politicisation

Medieval and early modern Western Europe experienced a wide variety of revolts. All of them were firmly defeated and punished, but some, because of their qualities, survived the oblivion to which they were condemned by chroniclers and apologists of the victors. This article focuses on the politicisation of the subalterns in the context of these disruptive actions. It takes as its object of study the forms, practices and languages through which alternative constructions of power were expressed. Furthermore, it revolves around the continuity of traditions of struggle that transcended

the barriers of time; the memory that the subalterns held about the political forms that emerged during past conflicts, their functions in the face of new challenges and their legacies for the future. In particular, the history of the Kingdom of Valencia was marked by persistent levels of conflict, which can be revealed by following the traces of several experiences of armed mobilisation that took place between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. These conflicts were called ‘unions’ or ‘germanies’ by the bodies of power that ultimately incorporated them into the list of violent and criminal associations forbidden by the legal codes. In the face of this condemnation, the reconstruction of the complete cycle of collective action re-signifies the importance of each struggle and its political qualities.

1. *Historical Memory and the Politicisation of the Commoners*

Like puzzle pieces, similar but always different, each collective manifestation retains a particular singularity. However, in an analysis covering a long period of time it is necessary to define common aspects that allow for a global approach. First, we start from the consideration of the subject as the protagonist of actions. We define the subject, in a broad sense, as a subaltern actor in terms of the unequal distribution of power in the societies of its times, but with profound differences within this group in terms of levels of wealth, status and social integration. The commoners were the non-privileged participants in the conflicts of the time, mostly against the patricians; but also, from a political perspective, we understand the plebeian question as a quality, as a limit to existing powers, as potential resistance (Foucault 2019) due to the disruptive potential of the commoners to change the public scene.



Figure 1 – Effects of *bad government in the countryside* (detail), Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, 1338-1340 (License Creative Commons CCO)

This quality was built on the experience of mobilisation and lies at the origin of action as a collective reworking, in which cultural models, forms of behaviour and the moral assumptions that feed them play a key role (Thompson 1995). Collective practices are the result of the interaction between lived experiences and inherited traditions. In this universe, 'cultural repertoires' define the set of means available to a group to express its claims, as the expressive patterns of the sector that develops an action, making the challenge visible. It is a collective reworking of ideas, traditions, languages, symbols and values that enables a group to identify itself as such. This reworking presupposes the rationality of the collective actor in the selection of responses that cannot be viewed as deviant behaviour or as the product of manipulation by external agents. On the contrary, every social movement implies a rational action based on a strategic approach that is interpreted from a political perspective, as it constitutes a collective challenge that is constructed by taking advantage of opportunities that allow for dissent, is inserted into confrontation and gives rise to identity constructions (Lorenzo Cadarso 2001).

From this perspective, social conflict acquires a political character, as groups organise themselves in defence of common interests and their practices lead to public transformations (Tilly 1995). Power relations take on particular meanings as they constitute a field of opposition to the regime, based on the attitudes and behaviours of the mobilised groups. The insurrectional society is characterised by an ideological radicalisation and a broadening of the public sphere that allows for an experience of political activation that gives rise to new identities. This interpretation gives value to what generates the conflict in terms of its development (Benigno 2000). Thus, instead of emphasising pre-existing grievances or conditions of possibility, we focused on the phenomena of the politicisation of the subaltern classes, on manifestations and practices that sought to give them expression and create feelings of belonging (Burstin 2005; Oliva Herrer 2018).

These actions mostly adopted violent languages, understood as those that subvert the norms of behaviour that govern societies. Violence appeared as an instrument of struggle through organised and directed actions to achieve specific objectives according to determined ends (Majo Tomé 2013). The instrumental character of violence is mainly observed in war. As a collective practice in different historical experiences throughout the Hispanic world, this violence created a political subjectivity, outlining a potentially dangerous identity for the social order that could be constituted as a coherent subject for action (Martínez 2019). Alongside these violent forms, historical sources have recorded the emergence, during the conflicts, of counter-cultural elements, carnivalesque and festive manifestations that hark back to the comic universe of Rabelais (Bakhtin 1987), and which sought to challenge the dominant social values. The interpretation of the commoners' symbolic and violent practices must consider their complex interaction with the presence of the invisible and objective violence that structures the social whole (Žižek 2010).

The emphasis on challenging actions requires a dynamic consideration of conflict. To this end, we follow Clausewitz's reflections. He understood war as a 'continuation of politics using other means', as a 'political act'; thus, it finds its logic in the power relations established by insurrection and its *raison d'être* in the dialectic of confrontation (2007, 48)¹. Such a proposal breaks with the conception of politics as consensus. On the contrary, every conflict 'will be all the more political the closer it approaches the extreme point of constituting a kind of friend-enemy grouping' (Schmitt 1998, 17). Politics is rupture and disagreement; it exists 'when the natural order of domination is interrupted by the institution of a part of those who have no part' (Rancière 1996, 25). This perspective gives centrality to antagonism, which is based on a field polarised by

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

the necessary relationship between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces. Within this dialectic interplay, processes of radicalisation, which are intended to disrupt existing political relations, become important (Mayer 2002; Benigno 2020). The significance of a conflict thus lies in the level of ‘political potentiality’ achieved in terms of disruption. This assessment becomes comprehensible in a long-term analysis that retrospectively conceives each moment of rupture as yet another piece of one single conflict. Such an approach makes it possible to reconstruct traditions of struggle on the basis of the memory of the subalterns. Shared memory, transmitted and socially constructed knowledge, is not developed by official instances, nor does it coincide with the registers of power. It is revealed in the conversion of political forms created during past conflicts and transformed into starting points and cultural repertoires of later collective actions, as was the case of the *Germania* (1519-1522) in the Kingdom of Valencia.²

2. *The Germania and the Emboldenment of the Commoners*

As an expression of the first crisis of the feudal system, the *Germania* of Valencia was one of a series of late medieval European conflicts: the Foránea revolt in Majorca (1450), the Catalan War of the Remences (1462-1486), the Irmandiños in Galicia (1467-1469), the Cornish rebellion (1497), the Udine carnival in Italy (1511), the Hungarian peasant uprising (1514), the Castilian Comunidades (1520-1521), the Peasants’ War (1525) in Germany and the Pilgrimage of the Grace in England (1536-1537), among others. In the Hispanic Monarchy, the political opportunity for collective action opened with the death of Ferdinand the Catholic in 1516. His reign was characterised by royal interventionism, and his death had an undeniable impact on the Crown of Aragon, as well as the dynastic crisis provoked by the rise to power of Charles V (García Cárcel 1975; Terol i Reig 2000). The *Germania* conflict was a consequence of difficulties deriving from the economic growth of the fifteenth century, the so-called Golden Age: generalised indebtedness, particularly of the municipal treasury; growing feudalisation due to the offensive of a ‘belligerent nobility’ and alienations of the royal patrimony; and royal interference and the oligarchisation of the representative bodies in decision-making, as opposed to the majority social weight of the urban trades. Political exclusion and marginalisation, as well as the arbitrariness of judicial and fiscal systems, constituted the collective grievances that fed the *Germania* in the capital city of the Kingdom of Valencia (Belenguer Cebrià 2001).

The starting point for the building of the *Germania* was the local authorities’ call for the formation of an armed militia in 1519 to defend the coast from the Barbary-Turkish threat during the political crisis. The result was an enlistment of the guilds, and ‘the city was left with the commoners alone, and these were licensed and commanded to assemble and elect captains and other officers of war, and to make other preparations of arms and things pertaining to war’ (Viciàna 2005, 16). The *adehenament*³ was the origin of the armed *Germania*, providing a first framework of military organisation. In the kingdom, ruling oligarchies either allowed or hindered compliance with compulsory military enlistment, and different positions influenced the trajectories followed by local militias. Defensive mobilisation became an element of political resistance, as the ‘people in arms’ began rethinking the conditions of existence with the constitution of the *Germania* (Pardo Molero 2001; Pérez García 2017). Its governing body, ‘the Board of the Thirteen Syndics of the People’, assumed the democratic representation of the

² Place names are given in Valencian, therefore the kingdom is denoted as ‘Valencia’, while ‘València’ refers to the city.

³ The *adehenament* is the call to military formation in groups of ten men.

unrepresented. It adopted a program against the nobility and in defence of the Royal Patrimony with measures of fiscal restructuring, public debt reduction, judicial equity and, above all, the widening of participation through the strengthening of the *Consell General* with the integration of artisans and artists as jurors. As a result of its success, the *Germania* spread throughout the kingdom due to a deliberate policy on the part of the trustees, as well as a spontaneous process of support, based on royal permission, not only for arms, but also for the movement itself (Vallés Borràs 2000). There was also regional solidarity from the towns and cities belonging to the crown, but also from the manorial towns that were trying to get reintegrated into the royal domain. Between 1520 and 1521, the movement reached its greatest extent, affecting the towns of Xàtiva, Alzira, Oriola, Ontinyent, Biar, Alcoi, Elx, Sagunt, Alacant and Albaida. Each of these territorial struggles had their own motivations, which converged with the capital's struggle (Pérez García 2021; 2022).



Figure 2 – First map of the *Regne de València*, Abraham Ortelius, 1568, (E)mancipa-Ment, Cullera-València (License Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0)

The increase in their numbers and demands coexisted with a process of gradual radicalisation between June 1520 and June 1521, due to the dialectical interaction with the reactionary forces that resisted the new political scenario. In this spiral, the questioning of the seigniorial regime led to attacks on property and the tearing down of gallows and jurisdictional symbols. In the meantime, preparations for repression began. The territorial nobility, who feared for their interests, opted for a military solution to end the conflict, obtaining the king's imposition of a viceregal authority favourable to their cause and, finally, the criminalisation of the *Germania*. The abolition of taxes through direct action in Valencia played a central role in the political turnaround. This sequence and the concurrence with the struggles in the rest of the kingdom deepened the antagonism between 'wolves and lambs'. The latter came from the guilds, the

rural lands and the middle classes (notaries, artists and merchants) along with some members of the clergy. Opposed to the lambs were the nobles, owners of jurisdictional lordships and knights who monopolised municipal power in the capital. In the kingdom, some oligarchies discretely backed the revolt, based on pre-existing disputes with seignorial interests. This social division between privileged and non-privileged sectors generated differences within the movement. Some of its members adopted and pushed for more radicalised positions. The individual, guild or jurisdictional motivations in the different local Germanies fed this joint commitment on the part of what Fuster called ‘captains of the *avalots* [riots] and of the war’ (1992, 31, my italics). This ‘plebeian quality’ was developed by the conflict itself, and the raising of war banners acted as a turning point. The majority of the movement’s members carried out military actions between June 1521 and December 1522, while a group with more moderate objectives began negotiations to avoid the punishment that was imposed from October 1521 onwards.

In this trajectory, the plebeian warriors adopted different fighting methods, with selective violence directed at certain targets according to their own ends, constantly redefined by confrontation with enemy forces. Throughout the process of radicalisation and by means of *avalots*, parades and direct action, the movement controlled the political scene, but, at the same time, exerted pressure to deepen the course of the insurrection. When the war began, the movement deployed a military and political offensive against the enemies of the *Germania* that changed its composition, its rank and file and its leadership, acquiring a revolutionary identity. Finally, as a result of military defeats, surrenders and the advance of repressive forces, the movement held out in the loyalist royal cities. There were attempts to revive the movement, with fleeting incursions, which succeeded in sabotaging control of the kingdom for several years. During the unfolding of these struggles, activism fuelled the politicisation of the subalterns through identity building, political practices and cultural expression. This politicisation was the result of the experience of armed mobilisation itself, the methods and meanings of which gradually changed. It was born out of the militia ideal of brotherhoods and confraternities, where military and political leaders were forged; the militia was essential as a form of pressure for reform. With radicalisation, this citizen militia became a belligerent army with its own companies, confronting the nobility’s forces on the battlefield, with arms becoming the main way of defining social antagonism. This function was deepened by the loss of royal legitimacy and the emergence of a *de facto* source of justification based on military victory. Weapons made it possible to achieve their aims. The movement was subject to a dual tendency which, because of the necessities of war, pushed it towards a centralised leadership, while the plebeian organisation became more and more based on popular assemblies. Over time, successive defeats and surrenders turned the organised army into a formation of militiamen, who encouraged the continuation of the war as a way out of the adverse scenario, having lost any possibility of reincorporation into legality. These irregular combat troops continued a focused resistance with incursions into lands reduced to obedience (Vallés Borràs 2000; Pérez García 2017). With this late partisan character and the appearance of messianism, the crusade ideal gained momentum, turning the *agermanats* into soldiers of Christ called to defeat the Antichrist at the end of time, capitalising on earlier prophecies of the Crown but in a subversive direction. The *Encobert*, as the expected Messiah came to be known, became embodied in successive leaders of commoner origin who took their place after each execution, successfully achieving public destabilisation (Pérez García and Catalá Sanz 2000). In each case, in this way, armed mobilisation provided capacity for the political interpellation of the *agermanats*.

The politicisation of the subalterns was reflected in the transformation of the fighting slogans which, in those days, acquired more importance than programmatic declarations. Thus, the battle cry of the *Germania* was ‘against the noblemen (*cavallers*) and in defence of the Royal

Patrimony', as the Thirteen of Valencia communicated to those of Ontinyent in June 1521. As the conflict progressed, other harsher and more determined slogans appeared; for example, 'Death to the nobles' or 'Death to the Moors', who formed part of the nobility's infantry forces against the *agermanats* in the battle of Gandia; or the slogan 'Alarm, the *Germania* are coming', which was heard in L'Olleria during Captain Torró's attempt at resistance in Ontinyent. But over and above these fleeting expressions, *Germania* in arms gave rise to political creations of identity. The name *agermanats* did not come from the protagonists of the conflict; they were the *adehenats*, who obeyed the defensive mandate of the king and elected their trustees. The name 'Union and Germania' came from their detractors and from official documents, giving the movement criminal connotations as a subversive conspiracy to denounce its illegality, recalling the earlier events of the fourteenth century. However, in its radicalised course and as in other conflicts, *agermanat* became a nominalised adjective referring to a state rather than a condition, susceptible to change in meaning according to circumstances, but always indicative of an opposition born out of conflict. Both the *sans culotte* in the eighteenth century and the *agermanats* in the sixteenth century became constituted as political categories expressing a self-definition; an ideal type that endowed the popular classes with a collective identity, to stimulate a sense of belonging and define a distinction against their enemies (Burstin 2005; Terol i Reig 2022). As the war wore on, internal differences deepened between those who fought for the cause of the people to the end, and those who collaborated in submitting to the obedience of the rebel centres. Thus, another identity was born, but in opposition: the concept of *mascarat* (masking), which legitimised violence against traitors. Accusation was a way of identifying those who put on the mask of loyalty, expunging any individual involvement in a now criminalised movement. *Mascarats*, in the sense of traitors, first appeared in the thirteenth-century Song of the Crusade, according to Duran (1982). In the *Germania*, it became an insult, and in the summer of 1521 it was forbidden by royal order on pain of death. In the course of the revolt, the concept was used extensively. Curiously, once the *Germania* was put down, possession of the title of *mascarat* was flaunted, and acquired the opposite meaning, that of fidelity (*ibid.*).

To these antagonistic identities we must add the political figure of the resistance. In March 1522, a plebeian *Encobert* appeared who, appropriating the messianic royal propaganda, incarnated it in a subversive sense and gave new legitimacy to the *agermanat* movement. His early assassination gave way to successive incarnations of commoners who assumed that name. This new leadership came to compensate for the consequences of Bellús, the last armed battle, by trying to maintain the morale of resistance with anti-aristocratic and millenarian arguments on the part of a faction of the *Germania* of Xàtiva. The plebeian political creation, the second *Encobert* recorded in the chronicles, was coined by the peasant Julià and the silk velvet weaver Pere Valladolid before the capitulation of the city. Despite this, the political fiction of the *Encobert*, as incarnated in successive commoners, was able to successfully give continuity to the *Germania* and undermine the control of the victors. If the last royal pardon for the *Germania* crime came in 1531, chronicler Miquel Garcia had noted a few years earlier that Alonso de Victoria's attempt to 'revolt against the king' and to 'make himself an Encobert' was thwarted (1984, 395-396). The same happened to a new conspiracy in 1542. The political alibi became a persistent and widespread phenomenon in popular culture (Pérez García and Catalá Sanz 2000; Terol i Reig 2022).

Rebellious practices were part of plebeian politicisation. An egalitarian line was imposed in taxation and justice, and the sovereign order of the unprivileged. These practices took on a political character because their actions went beyond military needs. The belligerent *Germania* challenged the manorial rule and all privilege, targeting the heart of the existing social order. It adopted anti-seigniorial measures with the *de facto* restitution of jurisdictions to the royal

domain and the annulment of grants awarded by the monarch, with the occupation of noble castles and fortresses, together with the removal or equalisation of taxes and charges. Taxation took centre stage with the abolition of taxes and charges in the city of Valencia by means of direct action in February 1521, a decisive measure during the events. Chroniclers narrated the day when a group of people went to the places where taxes were collected and shouted

Viva el rey, fuera derechos: y no se paguen más, que no hay derechos, y así huyeron los cogedores, abandonando la casa, tablas y libros: y los de la turba sediciosa, siempre voceando, rompieron los cuños y sellos y libros y mesas y asientos. (Escolano 1611, 1521-1522)⁴

Due to pressure from a section of the movement, and the natural logic of a conflictual dynamic, the *Germania* finally eliminated all taxes, abolishing the traditional mechanism of differentiation between social actors. During the civil war, they opted to take control of the tithes in several places such as Alzira, Ontinyent and Alcoi. A clear counter-example was offered by the radical *Germania* of Sagunt. The local syndics, in need of resources, adopted an egalitarian fiscal regime (Pérez García 2021; 2022). The cases confirm the importance of the fiscal agenda and highlight the questioning of pre-existing inequalities. The *Germania* in arms set itself up as an alternative power, seeking to abolish the nobility and to set up a new popular nobility of *agermanat* captains, who would take on the chivalric missions described by Ramon Llull centuries earlier: the defence of the faith, the fight for justice and the protection of the poor (Vallés Borràs 2000). An attempt was made to eliminate the bases of the social and economic power of the nobility by means of the forced baptism of Valencian Muslims, depriving the enemy of resources. The annulment of the legal personality of these vassals was carried out to the detriment of manorial revenues and to settle accounts for their military collaboration on the side of the noblemen (Benítez Sánchez-Blanco 2001).

During the armed mobilisation through until the end of the conflict, the *Germania* had a cultural side that contributed to radical plebeian contestation. First, the artisans of the different guilds occupied the public space. The *Germania* began when eight thousand men, in war order and with eighteen flags, paraded before the monarch's envoy. Català confirmed that, dressed in silk, maroon, taffeta and brocade that 'looked like Flemish ... all the trades passed before the cardinal shouting aloud: Long live the King' (1984, 14). These acts were a latent threat. Gathering in a square, parading through the city carrying arms and flags, ringing bells and drums and shouting assumed the character of public defiance (Oliva Herrer 2018). Furthermore, the sources confirm the presence of degrading forms of humour, the generalisation of irony and mockery, the festive firing of artillery, the ostentation of luxurious clothes, the use of games, ritual and ceremonies normally forbidden to commoners. This atmosphere of euphoria and freedom, due to the armed mobilisation, consecrated the centrality of the public square and its metaphors against the rich and powerful. This was followed by the inversion of social roles, as in the case of the *Encobert*; according to some chroniclers, 'as he was king, he armed knights and made nobles out of those who wanted to be nobles in Valencia and Alzira' (García 1984, 365). These cultural manifestations contributed to delimit an antagonistic field of political opposition (Parma 2021).

In addition, there was a constant concern for the memory of the Valencians. The political leader, Sorolla, harangued that the *Germania* 'durará más que el estado militar de este reino, que va ya de caída, y no ha de quedar memoria de los caballeros, pues que ha sido la causa

⁴ (Long live the king, no more taxes (*derechos*): and pay no more, there are no more taxes, and so the collectors fled, abandoning the house, the tables, and the books: and those of the seditious mob, always shouting, broke the seals and stamps and books and tables and seats).

de moverse el pueblo' (Viciana 2005, 169).⁵ During the radicalisation in the capital, violent attacks on property also attempted to eliminate any noble record; the commoners 'durará más que el estado militar de este reino, que va ya de caída, y no ha de quedar memoria de los caballeros, pues que ha sido la causa de moverse el pueblo' (192).⁶ The destruction of all written records and memories for the new times grew in importance as an integral part of a dialectic of confrontation. This memory to be built for the people linked its destiny to the triumph in the struggle and demonstrated, by its very existence, the radical, autonomous and sovereign will acquired by the subalterns due to the conflict itself.



Figure 3 – *Battle of Gandia*, 25 July 1521, in Ameller V. (1853), *Los mártires de la libertad española*, Madrid, Luis García (License Creative Commons CCO)

The *Germania* was finally defeated on the battlefield, punished by hanging and economic impositions, and denied by the accounts of the chroniclers and the apologists of the victors. The *agermanats* were defeated militarily, with the fall of Almenara, Orpesa-Castelló and Oriola being the most notable defeats. The climax of the armed confrontation was reached in July 1521 with the victory in the battle of Vernissa in Gandia against the troops of the nobility and the viceroyalty. However, the concentration of royalist forces achieved successive capitulations, the resignation of the Thirteen of Valencia being the most notable. The vital centre of the movement moved to Xàtiva, which continued the struggle until December 1522, together with Alzira. Captains and trustees from Alacant, Oriola, Alcoi and Ontinyent and others from the kingdom had taken refuge in the fortress of Xàtiva. This armed militancy of the commoners conditioned the repressive strategy, which was accentuated as the reaction achieved greater effective control

⁵ (will last longer than Noblemen of this kingdom, which is already in decay; and there must be no memory of the knights, for it has been the cause of moving the people).

⁶ (took all the deeds he [the nobleman] had for the preservation of his estate ... and burnt them, saying: Nay, let there be no memory left of the viscount our enemy).

of the territory. The punishment of the defeated was harsher than in other conflicts, combining executions with collective and communal economic charges, confiscation of goods and fines on guilds, people and places. The judicial processes demonstrated the breadth and depth of the movement (Pérez García 2021; 2022).

At the same time, a dominant political narrative was constructed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It condemned and stigmatised the conflict, banishing it from the memory of Valencia. Several narratives converged in a unanimous condemnation. In the viceregal court of the Duke of Calabria, short works were written with the aim of highlighting the triumph of the noble leaders as classical heroes. Humanist writers also severely discredited the *agermanats*. In this sense, Luis Vives wrote: ‘aquellos fue rabia ciega, no discusión. La plebe no sabía que quería ni por que había empuñado las armas’ (quoted in Parma 2023, 406);⁷ for his part, Juan de Molina described the *agermanats* as a ‘escuadrones de ladrones’ (*ibid.*)⁸. These writings regarded them as being distinguished solely by anger, disorder and madness. They also praised those who liberated Valencia from the ‘furiosos y sangrientas manos de extranjeros, rebeldes, desobedientes y salteadores de caminos’ (Molina 1522, quoted in Parma 2023, 40).⁹ The chronicles of the event, with omissions and misrepresentations, tended to reinforce the seditious and deliberate character of the leaders, making the popular support and mobilisation throughout the kingdom invisible. The evils were presented as the work of a small number of people, foreigners or ‘hubo en las Germanías sólo plebeyos y gente baja que estos no fueron ni son de consideración alguna ni se puede aplicar la culpa sino a ellos solos’ (Viciano 2005, 153; see also Iborra 2021 and Terol i Reig 2022).¹⁰

Despite efforts to deny it, the *Germania* was the disruptive movement with the greatest political potential inside and outside the kingdom. The impact of the *agermanats* had effects in Catalan, Aragonese and Mallorcan lands; with a demonstrated proselytising activity in the Kingdom of Majorca, where another *Germania* emerged around 1521 when the Valencian *Germania* had been radicalised, acquiring, from the beginning and until its defeat in 1523, a greater level of violence as it adopted more clearly defined class lines. The nobiliary pressure to exterminate the Valencian conflict was a reaction to this projection, since, according to some arguments, ‘the Kingdoms of Aragon and Catalonia were affected by the same evil’ (Català 1984, 23). In these territories there had been fleeting attempts to group people together in public spaces, which did not last over time. The fame of the *Germania* spread not only because the Valencian leaders travelled through these lands on their embassies to the royal court, but also because of the actions taken by the movement, which circulated as news through different channels among the towns. Thus, in Barcelona, posters were affixed in squares and on corners, and in Girona, letters from Valencia were read out publicly and passed from hand to hand. The decisive measure for the radicalisation of the *Germania*, the abolition of taxes and duties, had a special impact. The event was taken up as a banner and rallying cry throughout the region. The artisans shouted in the streets of Girona: ‘Long live the king, no impositions and death to the bad council’. In the letter to the Marquis of Vélez, it was reported: ‘se pregonó que todo hombre que quisiese libertad, que fuese con sus armas a cierta parte de la ciudad. Quieren decir que esto es que se quieren eximir de los grandes derechos que pagaban, de los no pagar y

⁷ (that was blind fury, not an argument. The mob did not know what it wanted or why it had taken up arms).

⁸ (squadron of thieves).

⁹ (furious and bloody hands of foreigners, rebels, disobedients and highwaymen).

¹⁰ (some few of the commoners and low people, who were not and are not of any consideration nor can the guilt be applied to them but to them alone).

otros dicen que también hay rebelión' (quoted in Duran 1982, 130).¹¹ A succession of different actions became known outside the kingdom because of 'por lo hecho en Valencia' (*ibid.*)¹² and, in some cases, as in the anti-seigniorial conflicts of the Castilian Comunidades, because of the *agermanat* influence itself, arousing class and political fears that also explain the exemplary punishment (Duran 1982). Inland, as Manuel Ardit (2012) affirmed, the *Germania* constituted the most formidable anti-seigniorial revolt in Valencian history. Despite the attempt to banish it from historical memory, the baptisms of Mudéjares carried out by the *agermanats* during the radical stage, with temporary damage to the manorial economy, were later validated by the crown, opening the door to an unstable situation that made future convulsions possible until the irreversible structural change brought about by the decree of expulsion in 1609 (Benítez Sánchez-Blanco 2001). The spill-over into radical contestation of the social order had definitively disrupted the Christian-Muslim relations on which seigniorial domination was based. This disruption of systemic violence also made the belligerent *Germania* valuable for future struggles.

3. *The Complete Cycle of Valencian Collective Action*

The significance of the *Germania* transcended the frontiers of its time, and its political potential is revealed through comparison with other Valencian experiences with similar motivations. The struggle against the nobility and feudal rule, in response to the offensive of the privileged sectors, was generally carried out through judicial complaints. However, this path was punctuated by collective actions that paved the way for the construction of movements of different magnitude and duration. Placing the *Germania* in perspective, we can reconstruct a cycle of action lasting through until the loss of effectiveness of the repertoire. The starting point was the War of the Union (1347-1348), the first armed popular mobilisation predating the events of 1519-1522. The itinerary ends with the *Second Germania* (1693). The inventory of the Valencian struggles does not end with these conflicts. We have left out of the analysis, for example, the Morisco revolts of the Serra d'Espadà (1526) or that of Muelas de Cortes south of Gandia (1609), whose agents and demands were different from those of the historical *Germania*. Nor do we analyse the violent instances of unrest in 1391 and 1455, because they were fleeting and reactive struggles that did not grow into comparable movements. Moreover, the conflict of 1693 only followed other attempts such as L'Horta in 1663, Valldigna in 1672 and Camp de Morvedre in 1689 (Ardit 2012). However, its claims, its territorial settlement and its very name place it as the point of arrival of the *agermanat* struggle. This triptych of armed mobilisations between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, with their similarities and differences, highlights the qualitative importance of the *Germania* in arms in the sixteenth century.

The first rupture between king and kingdom opened up an opportunity for action with the War of the Union. The creation of the Kingdom of Valencia by James I, the Conqueror, in 1238, was the culmination of the *Reconquista* process. The distribution of land among its participants led to rapid seigneurialisation. The crown allowed a progressive alienation of prerogatives and the feudalisation of the royal castles. The government of towns and villages was left in the hands of upstanding citizens, with artists, notaries, merchants and jurists flourishing alongside them. The creation of the kingdom provoked reactions among Aragonese noblemen

¹¹ (it was proclaimed that every man who wanted freedom should go with his weapons to a certain part of the city ... by this they mean that they want to exempt themselves from the heavy duties they were paying, not to pay and others say that there is also rebellion).

¹² (what had been done in Valencia).

to the impossibility of extending their lordships; a situation that led to a succession of dynastic wars, including the confrontation with king Peter IV, the Ceremonious. Valencia, like Aragon, demanded the reintegration of its liberties, which it considered violated by the royal decision to abolish the privileges granted in 1288, but especially by the appointment of his daughter Constanza as heiress instead of the king's brother, James of Urgel, in violation of the tradition of succession that prevented women from receiving such a mandate. The issue was to be resolved in the *Corts Generals* and not by royal arbitration. Peter IV's position did not change, and the formation of the Union was inevitable as a way to assert the voice of the kingdom. Royalist officials were accused of committing all sorts of abuses: arbitrary prosecutions, improper charges and invasions of local jurisdictions or unjustified confiscations. The demands of the movement included the redress of grievances and the limitation of the monarch's power (Fuster 1992; Baydal Sala 2013). The confrontation led to a civil war. First the city revolted and then all the royal villages joined one after another. The Council of Valencia proposed a sworn union: first by political means and then by means of an urban uprising through the extensive network of parishes and the corporate structure of the trades. A general militarisation was promoted to defend the interests of the royal patrimony against the authority of the king and the lords: a watershed moment that would later mature in the *Germania*. The armed formation was followed by institutionalisation as a political movement based in the capital, and the pact with Aragon was signed, proclaiming a common programme. On the opposing side, an assembly in Vila-real gave rise to the monarchist party that was ironically christened *Germandat* or *Fra-ternitat*. Weapons determined the fate of the warring sides.



Figure 4 – Codex of the *Furs de València*, Palau de Cervelló in València, 1329.
(Author Joanbanjo, Wikimedia Commons, License Creative Commons CC BY-SA 3.0)

Mass mobilisation, in the form of militias that supported the decision of the ruling oligarchies, was the preeminent characteristic of Valencian unionism. This coalition differed from the nobiliary nature of the Aragonese coalition in that its imprint was provided by the popular uprising, with the clear leadership of the bourgeoisie, the participation of the artisans and the mass mobilisation of the common people. The vast majority of the members of the movement came from the citizenry and the craft guilds (Rodrigo i Lizondo 1975). This composition was a consequence of the critical context in which it developed. Dissatisfaction with fiscal policy was latent and the insurrectional nature of the movement allowed other overlapping conflicts to emerge. The union was interpreted by the rural vassals as an ally in the face of the plundering by the lords who supported the king. The agrarian crisis had reached its peak with the emergence of the bubonic plague; the political crisis also grew with the weakness of a monarchy bent on carrying out constant military campaigns, which led to an increase in taxes and to indebtedness of the municipal powers (Terol i Reig 1994). To this we should add the interference of royal officials in local economic affairs and the increase in insecurity struggling from the struggle of factions. All these problems affected the artisan sector, motivating extensive participation in the unionist endeavour (Martínez Vinat 2018).

The Union was the first mobilisation of trades, and, for the first time, social antagonism took root through the alignment of the territorial nobility with the enemy. The royalist forces included the most powerful lords, some of whom were associated with the king as holders of court offices and members of military orders such as Montesa and Calatrava. In previous years, the city-dwelling knights had refused to pay the neighbourhood contributions intended to alleviate the situation of the municipal public funds. Tensions between the citizens and the territorial nobility were long-standing, stemming from the obstacles the nobles imposed on the free communal use of pastures, firewood and other materials throughout the kingdom (Rodrigo i Lizondo 1975). The inclination of the nobility towards the monarchist party was the expected corollary of the growing seigneurialisation. The alienation of royal patrimony by the crown had an effect on the unionist struggle, which was led by a citizen oligarchy with the aim of defending the integrity of the royal domains. For the populations of the kingdom, it represented a way of resolving their conflicts by the quicker method of rebellion, leaving aside the everyday means of opposition to the manor or the village or the city, by means of the courts. In the 1340s, a new wave of alienations gained momentum. The monarchy's spiralling expenditure had led to this growth and, as a result, the taxation of the villages that supported the royal estate intensified. Many of the Unionist nuclei were villages that formed or had traditionally formed part of the royal patrimony; for example, Alzira, Morvedre, Llíria, Cullera, Corbera, Castelló, Ontinyent, Bocairent, Biar, Castalla and Xixona (Terol i Reig 1994; Baydal Sala 2013). The division between the popular and the aristocratic sides was expressed under the unionist and monarchist banners respectively. The fourteenth-century conflict was the clearest precedent of the struggle between privileged and non-privileged that showed its greatest potential under the protection of the *Germania*.

The war began in December 1347 and the Unionists achieved military successes at Bétera and La Pobla. A royal expedition against the capital failed and the king fell into the hands of the Unionists, who forced him to accept their demands. When the armed people burst into the royal enclosure, hundreds of people with trumpets and drums forced the monarch to dance in a humiliating way, and he was the object of mockery and derision during a gigantic carnival ceremony. The situation went on for months until the court left the city. On arriving in Terol, the king went back on his promises. The advance of the plague and the failure of the Aragonese union changed the scenario. The royal offensive led to the total defeat of the Ara-

gonese coalition at the battle of Épila in July 1348; Valencian unionism became isolated and degenerated into an anarchic and radicalised force. Under the leadership of Captain Joan Sala, the Unionists were finally defeated at the Battle of Mislata in December of the same year. The Union was destroyed and the repression was swift and brutal, but also selective and exemplary. Twenty-two Unionists were executed, among them Joan Sala, who was forced to drink the molten bronze of the Union bell, whose tolling had called for popular mobilisation. The king's victory succeeded in annulling certain concessions but did not abolish the 'pactist system' and preserved municipal autonomy (Rodrigo i Lizondo 1975). It was only with Ferdinand the Catholic that royal interventionism triumphed, and his death opened the way for a rethinking of the king-kingdom relationship with the *agermanat* struggle. The War of the Union thus acquired less political potential, measured in disruptive terms, since collective action was always subordinated to tensions between the Crown, the nobility and the citizen oligarchy. Although the Unionist movement was supported by the Commons, the political initiative was always in the hands of the urban patriciate. This subordinate nature of mobilisation gave it a lesser capacity for interpellation in comparison with the brotherhood.

However, that first confrontation and other medieval military actions were important in the cycle of conflict, as they enabled concessions and privileges to be obtained from the crown, which constituted the legal channels for actions in the sixteenth century. The crown, seeking to impose its hegemony on the peripheral territories, formed alliances to curb private ambitions, sometimes paving the way for popular mobilisation. This allowed the consolidation of an ideological horizon, which explains the legalistic positions of the *agermanat* movement in its beginnings, as well as its later disruptive positions, in the face of the real failure to fulfil its duty to defend its domains. The royal privileges that protected both the adhesion and the primary actions of the *Germania* originated in this late mediaeval period. This was the case of the privilege invoked for the election of artists and craftsmen as jurors. This was granted after a revolt of the people against the nobles in 1275, a movement led by Miquel Peris that also received the name of Union. The actions were characterised by the toppling of noble houses and the departure of the people with war orders to burn and plunder Moorish places in the seigniorial domains. The revolution was put down, the organisation disbanded, the leaders punished and some fled. Every sanctioned privilege was uprooted by collective action that seeped through the cracks of royal and nobiliary domination. In the social division of the late Middle Ages ('majors, middle and minor') formulated by Eiximenis, the appeal to the royal privileges won by the latter actors was an instrument to impose the will of the majorities on political decisions (Zurita 1610, III, ch. 49).

The war gave the guilds an experience of mobilisation, a first step in becoming aware of their social supremacy. As early as 1342, the guilds had demanded greater participation in government decisions and the creation of a commission to supervise the actions of the executive. A restrictive measure by the monarchy revoked the privilege of 1283, which had granted them the right of assembly. This was a response to the liveliness of the citizens' trades, whose demands had transcended the strictly economic framework to include matters of urban policy. The royal decision helped to bring the citizen sector and the trade associations closer together. The Union demonstrated the weight of the trades that would later become the soul of the *Germania*. Both the major trades, which enjoyed political representation, and the minor trades, which lacked recognition, took part in the movement. The trades belonging to the flourishing textile crafts, in particular weavers, shoemakers, brokers and tailors, took centre stage. The list of signatures of the craftsmen who came to the Council to take the oath of support for the Union demonstrated their importance. Of the total number of signatories from the city of Valencia, more than a

third came from these guilds. Subsequent repressive measures also highlighted the importance of local associationism. In the Courts of 1349, the corporate veto was re-established and the rights of association were restricted. The representation privileges of craftsmen were annulled, and political exclusion was established. After the end of the repressive period, the professional guilds gained new strength from 1353 onwards (Martínez Vinat 2018).

In the course of this armed experience, collective organisations were consolidated which gave rise to the later *agermanat* movement. From the fourteenth century onwards, brotherhoods and confraternities emerged in the Kingdom of Valencia. Based on the ideal of brotherhood, they acquired a dual character: they postulated a religiosity marked by charity and devotion but also evolved into defence associations due to their links with the artisan world. Gathered around a patron saint, they established a rudimentary social security system by collecting subsidies for the protection of the sick, widows and orphans. Their development was linked to different political situations. At the beginning, trades were structured, and brotherhoods and guilds were formed. In the thirteenth century, royal privileges granted autonomy and the right of assembly to devotional confraternities. The rest remained forbidden and associated with forms of subversion. At the end of the thirteenth century, the trade guilds acquired prominence and gained participation in municipal government and administration. In fourteenth-century Valencia, the repression of the associative movement persisted, but the repeal of prohibitions favoured its expansion. The confraternities developed a social psychology that gave them a sense of belonging and strength in the face of the arbitrariness of the powerful (Iradiel 1993). The defeat of the Union resulted in the elimination and restriction of privileges, but it was only temporary, as they gained strength in the second part of the century. Proof of this lies in the creation, in 1365, of the company of 'Centenar de la Ploma', an urban militia of different trades which, years later, founded its own guild under the name of St. George. In the fifteenth century, this 'Confraria de Sant Jordi' guarded the Senyera (Valencian flag) in ceremonial acts, a symbol of local freedom and the armed defence of their rights in the urban emblem. In the *Germania*, this same brotherhood became the epicentre of the movement and its demands (Pérez García 2017). Moreover, under the protection of the Union, traditional forms of armed mobilisation gained strength. Urban militias, as a system of political-military organisation in the medieval city, were instruments for maintaining the status quo. Armed actions were justified in defence of freedoms that had been disturbed and undermined by the enemy. These formations made immediate military recruitment possible, following the citizen's crest, Lo Rat Penat, and enshrined a form of *de facto* enforcement of justice without the specific permission of the king. The city's main defensive force was also a factor in the conflicts, due to its close relationship with corporate institutions. These ambivalent forms of repressive-military organisation and, at the same time, possible elements of resistance, remained in force until the seventeenth century.

The centrality of war in the Valencian Late Middle Ages was essential as a political condition for the conflict of the Brotherhoods: indebtedness, oligarchisation, alienation of the Royal Patrimony and interventionist attempts by the monarch that were expressed as a monolithic reality under the reign of Ferdinand the Catholic (Narbona Vizcaíno 2006). In the face of this power structure, the violent urban sociability of the previous period took root in subjects with war potential, engendered in these battles. In the transition to the modern world, violence was not an accidental or sporadic phenomenon. It permeated the feelings, behaviour and life of the Renaissance in a period when no institution monopolised the effective use of force. The frontier character of the city and the kingdom led to social militarisation, to the predominance of warriors and military virtues, and to the participation of broad social sectors in warfare, fostering a 'type of mobility'. The Union contributed to the formation of a vague

conglomerate of ‘plebeian warriors’. As the Unionist movement became more radical, it took on disruptive features. A new magistracy was created, that of the war captain, who was endowed with exceptional powers. This unionist war captain was the origin of ‘war and *avalot* captains’ who transformed the *Germania* into a revolutionary movement. This ‘plebeian warrior’ was an asset exploited by the expansionist monarchies but was also a source of concern for the powers-that-be. In the seventeenth century, they were criminalised and transformed into miscreants or brigands. Historical destiny made them outlaws, due to the state’s progressive monopoly of force. But before that, in the sixteenth century and with the *Germania*, it became a channel for the expression of egalitarian aspirations (Pérez García 1990).

In short, the peculiar articulation of war and politics in the fourteenth century precipitated the mass popular uprising that opened a cycle of conflict. An anti-seigneurial mentality emerged as a product of antagonism and, at the same time, subjects and forms of collective organisation showed their strength, providing a channel for future mobilisation. The *Germania* was the highest point of plebeian power, as it gained autonomy and defined its own goals. After the defeat of 1522, the word *agermanat* was added to the list of banned associations. Doomed to oblivion, the movement survived in the memory of the subalterns. Thus, in 1693, the cry ‘Long live the poor, and death to bad government’ gained momentum in the kingdom. The rural rebels tried to create another insurrectionary community. Of these new insubordinates, the authorities noted that ‘seeing so many together, with arms in hand, they began to call themselves the army of the *agermanats*’ (Conca Alonso 2021, 160-170). More than one hundred and sixty years after the sanctioning of the last royal pardon, one of the most important jacqueries in Europe broke out, paying homage to the ‘*Germania del Regne*’ (Conca Alonso 2021, 154).

The event takes us back to an era marked by revolts and secessions on the European stage. The policies of the princes and their wars led to a deluge of new taxes, and life became more difficult during the ‘iron century’, the century of soldiers. In this context, many turned against their governments, blaming them for their misfortunes. The 1640s saw four major revolts within the Monarchy of Spain, in Catalonia, Portugal, Sicily and Naples. All the conflicts took place in peripheral territories that maintained a traditional autonomy as the basis of the political balance between the crown and local interests. The need to increase contributions shook the existing order and opened a space for the questioning of the dominant oligarchies by the ‘peripheries in arms’ (Elliot 1996; Parker 2006). Since 1635, the Kingdom of Valencia had been receiving continuous royal requests for men, money and supplies for the Catalan and Italian war fronts. However, in 1690, places like La Marina were reluctant to contribute to the *tercios* (Spanish troops) and, a year later, the powers of the *junta de leva* (recruitment board) were extended. The towns that did not contribute were those that later became involved in the *Second Germania*. All in all, the kingdom underwent an expansionist phase in the seventeenth century, but the subjugation of the local institutions to the Crown meant that economic growth was conditioned by increasingly costly exactions for the Valencians (Conca Alonso 2021). Thus, under the reign of Charles III, the War of the League of Augsburg against Louis XIV’s France had a double effect on the Valencian territory, as it increased the physical and human contribution necessary for the defence of Catalonia and, at the same time, led to the bombardment of Alacant. In addition to the abuses of the era of royal economic exactions, the local coastline was also defenceless. A riot broke out in the capital against French residents; rioters demand they leave the city with ‘stones and shotguns’. The viceroy was forced to enlist the militia, but without arming the plebs. The war contributed to the aggravation of the conflict but did not directly provoke it because it did not provide the reasons for a new *Germania* (Espino López 2011).

The material context in which the conflict took place was one of economic growth in the kingdom from the middle of the century onwards, with greater agricultural production, diversification and commercialisation. The rationalisation of the manor and agrarian reorganisation were the basis for prolonged economic and demographic growth and the development of commercial agriculture in Valencian lands. Marginal and less productive lands were abandoned in favour of other lands formerly populated by Moriscos, which were more profitable. Legal claims against the manorial regime that posed obstacles to these expectations of economic growth constituted the first step in the conflict of 1693. Behind them were wealthy peasants with sufficient economic and intellectual capacity to put forward their demands. The *agermanat* movement resented the burdens imposed on them as an obstacle to development. By legal means, they tried to redefine the conditions of the lease, but the lords created obstacles to the procedures. Attempts to revert many former royal territories to the Crown increased at this time. But growth also led to the concentration of ownership and the progressive loss of property by the rural majority. An increasingly impoverished peasant sector faced the demands of the manor, along with the rents it had to pay to the rich peasants on whom it depended. Part of the population subject to the manor was forced to cultivate other people's land and to seek other means to satisfy the onerous burdens, especially those who lived on less productive land. Once the legal route failed, these impoverished vassals, in need of a reduction in the levies, continued their demands through rebellion. Francesc García, a neighbour of Ràfol d'Almúnia, leader of the *agermanats*, and other condemned men were day labourers with no registered assets. Misery and prosperity intersected and coincided in the same protest (Furió 1995; Ardit 2012; Conca Alonso 2021).

On a comparative scale, the two Germanies shared common features: their programme in defence of the royal patrimony, their anti-aristocratic drive, their slogans against bad government, the religiosity of their ideas and a political dynamic that led to armed action. Another fundamental point of convergence is to be found in their geography. The present-day central *comarcas* (regions) were where the revolt of 1693 broke out, an area densely populated by New Christians, where the seigniorship reached its greatest extent and where the most important noble titles in the kingdom were held. The *comarcas* had been populated in the past by Muslims and were the main site of the forced baptisms that paved the way for the expulsion of Moriscos in 1609 (Conca Alonso 2021). The population charters drawn up a posteriori fixed the manorial burdens and gave the lords control over the election of officials and agricultural production, the use of firewood, pastures and game, as well as the instruments of processing and commercialisation. The peasants argued that the imposed obligations, which exceeded the established ones, were illegal because they contravened the privileges of the Reconquest and, therefore, they were justified in not paying the manorial charges, and they expressed their desire to become towns under the direct authority of the king. They based their position on fiscal arguments; questioning the amount of taxes, they did not demand their reduction but rather their suppression (Torró Gil 1993; Pérez Aparicio 1998).



Figure 5 – *Embarcation of Moors in the 'Grao de València'*, Pere Oromig, 1616
(Public domain images, License Creative Commons CCO)

The 1693 attempt did not produce actions comparable to those of the sixteenth century. It was a minor challenge in political terms due to its fleeting nature, the weakness of its army and its social isolation. It was a rural-based anti-nobility uprising, led by the vassals of La Marina, La Safor, El Comtat and the Albaida valley. In the first stage, they presented their demands peacefully, from January to June 1693. When their objectives were frustrated, an armed revolt took place between 9 and 15 July, which led to repressive actions and clandestine resistance. At the beginning of the year, some villages in the southern mountains began to mobilise to prevent the payment of the manorial levies. The viceroy urged them to send representatives to Valencia to legally present their demands, which were soon rejected. The representatives of thirty-five Valencian towns presented a memorial of grievances to the king. The Council of Aragon refused to intervene, declaring that the Royal Audience was the competent court and had already rejected the vassals' claims. At the same time as the legal action, a climate of social unrest was growing in the Valencian countryside, and attempts were made to curb it with imprisonment, radicalising the conflict and resulting in sedition. Tensions increased at harvest time, when the peasants refused to pay their rents. Francesc García carried out a subversive campaign in La Marina, claiming that the king was inciting them to take up arms against the powerful, a harangue that extended its reach to La Safor. In June, the residents of Carlet and Benimodo, Ràfol d'Almúnia and Petrés denied their lords the partitions. The trigger for the armed actions was the arrest in the town of Vilallonga of peasants who had refused to hand over part of the harvest that belonged to the Duke of Gandia as the holder of eminent domain over the land. On the same day as the intimidating act, four hundred peasants from the neighbouring villages gathered to go out in procession. The crowd grew to three thousand men, who marched with drums and banners, shouting 'long live the

poor and death to bad government', under the invocation of the 'Verge del Remei' (Our Lady of Remedy) and St. Vicent Ferrer, the most popular of Valencian saints. The arrests were the catalyst for a widespread insurrection of the population of the counties marked by *agermanat* violence. The rebels managed to free those imprisoned, taking Vilallonga, which lacked defences. They continued their march towards Albaida and reached Muro. According to the witnesses, they also shouted 'death to the traitors', and threw their hats and saddlebags in the air as a sign of victory. The forces of the governor of Xàtiva, by order of the viceroy, cut them off. After the failure of the negotiation that was intended to avoid the confrontation, a fight ensued between highly disproportionate forces. Four hundred men on horseback, with two pieces of artillery and accompanied by a like number of the kingdom's militia, averted the danger of the revolt spreading; they put it down in a single battle at Setla de Nunyes, near Muro de Alcoi, on 15 July. All the dead, some ten or twelve, belonged to the *agermanat* side. The rest fled to the mountains (Furió 1995; Conca Alonso 2021). The conflict remained a fleeting insurrection. The rebels had no chance of defeating the enemy, as they lacked organisation, combat experience and weapons, unlike the sixteenth-century *agermanat* captains.

The importance of the *Second Germania* lies in its demands. The memorial presented by more than thirty-five lordships in the Kingdom of Valencia denounced the large amount of taxes levied by the lords, higher than those granted by the population charters, and questioned the legality of the levies, appealing to royal privileges that proved the expiration of some of them or directly freed them from paying duties for being inhabitants of the kingdom. Far from asking for their reduction, they demanded their elimination (Conca Alonso 2021). The suppression of seigneurial burdens as a demand synthesised the long Valencian social struggle, together with the defence of royal domain, which meant not only fair taxation, but also the maintenance of their political autonomy. The Valencian lordship was characterised by the absence of territorial dominion and by the weight of jurisdiction in the administration of justice, which were also the cause of anti-seigneurial conflict. Domination was not only manifested in strictly economic terms; there was also a more important political component of reinforcing the power of the feudal lords over the peasant communities. The royal domain allowed the vassals full ownership of the land, they bore fewer taxes, but the communes also enjoyed considerable autonomy. Within the framework of anti-tax demands, a coherent programme was forged. The elimination of manorial tributes demanded by the *Second Germania* sought the establishment of a new political regime with no place for the feudal nobility and their jurisdictions, and the monarchy's repressive response left no doubt as to the class that supported it (Torró Gil 1993).

Fundamentally, the conflict acquired capital importance in the cycle of collective action by revealing the place of the first *Germania*. It re-signified the previous plebeian wars at their most critical moment, as the rural conflict of the seventeenth century affected the same geography where the forced baptisms of Moriscos of 1521-1522 had taken place. The actions of 1693 can be interpreted as a by-product of those past acts, that sought and achieved the rupture of the existing material structure. However, such actions revalued the defeat and the ensuing punishment, turning the sixteenth-century movement into a cultural repertoire of struggle, confirming its scope and potentiality. When they created a militia organisation in La Font d'en Carròs, the peasants chose Josep Navarro, a surgeon from Muro, who called himself 'General of the army of the *agermanats*', as their military leader. They saw themselves as the successors of a revolt that had taken place far back in historical time. Assuming the name *agermanats* was linked to the banners in defence of the royal patrimony, raised in blood and fire by the first *Germania*, and to their actions against the nobiliary forces that had temporarily interrupted the systemic violence. The interruption explains this semantic appropriation so distant in time, since, despite repression and oblivion in official

history, it had left an indelible mark as the greatest challenge to privilege. The *Germania* ‘was kept alive among the popular classes of the kingdom through collective memory and orality; (it was) a movement that sought to resume and win’ (Conca Alonso 2021, 154).

The movement of 1693, though limited in time, was decisive: it represented a synthesis of the struggle against the lords developed in the kingdom in a long historical cycle of collective action. The rivalry ended outside this cycle when, under the cover of the War of Succession, the manorial system on which these persistent warring worlds were based was abolished. Because the challenge was of lesser magnitude, the seventeenth-century revolt involved limited repression. Criminal charges were brought against Francesc García, Josep Navarro and eight other captains, all of whom were absent, and some twenty prisoners were imprisoned after the battle. Most of the leaders were later arrested and executed (Conca Alonso 2021). Everything seemed to be over, but resistance continued. After the military defeat, squads of knights went around the villages demanding payment and new attempts at insurrection appeared. The movement continued through the courts. Pérez Aparicio wrote that ‘with legality as a weapon, bordering on collective or individual disobedience, the vassals continued to harass the feudal regime, not with their faces uncovered to avoid military defeat, but behind legal provisions to validate their rights’ (1998, 250). After the *Second Germania*, claims against the lords continued in the form of legal demands for reintegration into the Crown, for improved contractual conditions, especially about the division of fruits, and in the form of disputes over the exercise of jurisdiction or the control of the municipal government. At the same time, in various places and at various times, farmers refused to comply with the levies in whole or in part. The repression had produced no more than a false closure, as exemplified by the anonymous letter that circulated, a year after the events, from hand to hand and from village to village, calling for people to go to Valencia to demand rights with ‘bullet and gunpowder’ (Espino López 2011; Conca Alonso 2021). The uprising did not take place, but those words of unknown authorship were a parable of the struggle against the nobility that had not ended. The eighteenth century finally saw the abolition of the seigneurial regime, which closed the breach opened by the egalitarian *Germania*. Thus, those ‘captains of the avalots and the war’ had at last been avenged, renewing the war between wolves and lambs, and allowing new and uncomfortable plebeian barbarisms to continue, through different methods, the political fight for survival.

4. Conclusion

For centuries, in the Kingdom of Valencia, there were different experiences of armed mobilisation that involved the voice of the subaltern. In the sixteenth-century conflict, the *agermanat* movement created a space for action that was not bestowed but rather constructed through the collective experience. This collective experience fostered autonomous mobilisation, operating beyond legal constraints, as the antagonism within the traditional patrician-plebeian contradiction intensified. In this warlike confrontation, the *Germania* in arms gave birth to forms of politicisation, identity building and forms of contestation against privilege that were significant not only in its own times, but also for the years to come. The movement was part of a cycle of conflict that developed through both legal means and disruptive action. It inherited a legacy of fourteenth-century unionism, which included the experience of an armed mobilisation that demonstrated the social primacy of the subalterns and outlined the antagonism against the arbitrariness of the nobility. The *agermanat* struggle spread further into the seventeenth century, a corollary to their claims against the lords, which demonstrated the conversion of the *Germania* itself into a crucial piece of a cultural repertoire of political struggle. This historical

survival was a product of the plebeian quality that achieved a rapid but decisive disruption of systemic domination. This disruption, while defeated in the battlefield and in the narratives of the victors, was incorporated into the historical memory of the subalterns.



Figure 6 – *Rocroi, el último tercio* by Augusto Ferrer-Dalmau, 2011
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The Memory of Rebellion (Lyon, 1529)

Anne Bérroujon

University of Grenoble Alpes, Larhra
(<anne.beroujon@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr>)

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Abstract

The first half of the sixteenth century saw an explosion of popular revolts throughout Europe. Focusing on the French city of Lyon, the article analyses written expressions of revolt, including street bills, posters and, indirectly, oral relays. In April 1529, the city was devastated by the *Grande Rebeayne* (great revolt), triggered by a placard accusing the municipality of incompetence and corruption and calling for a riot. Despite the harsh repression, others appeared in the following years in an effort to rekindle the flame of rebellion. How did these writings come down to us and under what conditions were they produced? Despite the anonymous popular signature, did they really express the views of subaltern people? Can the precedents and customs on which they rely be reconstructed, given that the archives were jealously preserved by the municipal councillors? How does a chain of insurrectionary writings take shape over time and is there evidence of re-use in popular memory? Drawing on rare traces produced chiefly by political elites (handwritten consular archives and sixteenth- and seventeenth-century histories of Lyon), the article seeks to answer these questions and to counterbalance the dominant discourse by articulating the written protest and the social memory emerging from it.

Keywords: Lyon, *Placard*, Popular Politics, Riot, The Poor

1. Introduction

As is well known, the history of popular rebellions in the early modern period is rarely written from the point of view of the rebels. The very term ‘rebellion’ marks its failure, its disqualification by the victors. Many historians have noted the selective process conducted after the fact, as the dominant viewpoint of the flouted authorities rectified, simplified and impoverished what should not have happened: the plot is then reduced to that of a lowly people who, in the heat of the moment, were dragged along by a few leaders who reawakened their old demons (antifiscal, frumentary, political or religious). The insurgents only leave minute traces, which are difficult to track down. The memory of their revolt is written outside of them, and they are doubly dispossessed of it:

because they failed and because their movement is normalised. It is therefore through the study of a repertoire of recurrent actions (Thompson 1988; Bercé 1986), reported gestures and words (Farge 1992) and the notations of traumatised elites (Scott 1990) that we can find the complexity of the meanings of the riot. As for the ‘alternative memories’ (Wood 2007, 244), those running counter to the official account of the rebellion, they are apprehended in bits and pieces, through oral transmission over time (Joutard 1977) or during new insurrectionary episodes where models or counter-models, key notions, names and symbols re-emerge (Wood 2007).

In this article I will focus on one revolt in particular: the *Grande Rebeyme* of Lyon.¹ Firstly because it frightened the powers more than others, as can be seen from the significance of the material in the archives and the stories it generated, both immediately and afterwards. But, above all, because it was preceded by *placards* giving the reasons for the discontent, in particular poor grain management, and called for an uprising. Yet, though the riot has been studied extensively by historians (Gascon 1961; Bayard and Cayez 1990; Chopelin and Souriac 2019), the *placards* have been neglected and, before the nineteenth century, completely ignored.² Why were these posters obscured for so long? What message did they convey? Did this writing nurture a local culture of revolt?

Lyon, Sunday 25 April 1529: a thousand people gathered in the Place des Cordeliers, rang the convent’s tocsin, rampaged through the surrounding streets and looted the houses of the rich. The following day, a granary in the town, where the reserve grain was stored, was targeted. On the third day, the rioters went to Ile Barbe, on the edge of the city, where there were abundant supplies of grain. Then came the repression, which was very harsh: hangings, galleys, banishments, whippings and ladders for those accused of being part of the rebellion. It was a long process: the search for the culprits lasted until at least 1531. In recording the event in the consular registers, the town clerk noted that it all started with posters: ‘Le dimenche vingt cinquiesme avril mil cinq cens vingt neuf apres pasques ... Est assavoir que la sepmaine precedent ledit dimenche plusieurs placartz furent trouvez affigez en plusieurs carrefours d’icelle ville’.³ He then copied the text, before beginning the story of the revolt. Although the original documents have not been preserved, this careful copy is available: initially ephemeral, the writing was thus perpetuated and entered registers designed to uphold the honour of the magistrates. Is its content so unusual that it should be recorded? It is known that posters, *Flugschriften* (flying sheets), pamphlets and flyers spread throughout Europe, even before Luther and even more so after him, in support of dissenting ideas (Lecuppre-Desjardins 2010; Cohn 2014; Deschamp 2016): in the Holy Roman Empire alone, there were the *Bundschuh* uprisings (1493-1517), the unrest over the Lutheran cause (1517-1521), the iconoclastic crises (1521-1522), the Palatinate knights’ mutiny (1522-1523), the Peasants’ War (1524-1525) and its 12-article manifesto (Hoyer 1979). But the planning of a riot by clandestine posting to the entire urban population is more rarely attested.⁴

It is on the making of these *placards* that I will first focus, by studying their verbal semantics and visual grammar, as well as the context of reception. A series of distinct acts must be consid-

¹ *Rebeyme* means ‘revolt’ in Lyon’s dialect.

² With the notable exception of Henri Hauser, who used the *placard* as evidence of the religious dimension of the revolt (1896).

³ Archives Municipales de Lyon (hereinafter AML), BB47, 237 (On Sunday the twenty-fifth of April 1529 after Easter ... It is to be known that the week preceding the said Sunday, many placards were found posted in many crossroads of this city). Unless otherwise stated, translations are mine.

⁴ Of course, it is not possible to claim to have knowledge of all the revolts that took place in Europe in the years 1510-1520. Furthermore, some revolts may have been triggered by a written document calling for a meeting to be held on a certain date, without any record of it having been kept.

ered (Fraenkel 2006): writing (for which we can assume several versions prior to the drafting of the final text); handwritten or printed copy; display; reading and recopying. Which act was decisive? For whom? In what way did the time lag between one act and another play a role and modify the perception of the written word by the author(s)/the authorities/the population? I intend to show that the posters triggered not only what the political elites called ‘emotion’, a term generally used to designate popular sedition (irrational disturbance) but whose relevance is particularly questionable here given that the revolt was preannounced and argued for, but also a series of actions that began before the riot. A further question concerns the identity of the author(s) concealed behind the anonymity of the signatory, ‘Le povre’ (The poor). Although the purpose of the posters pertains to a widely shared political culture, did the *placards* emanate from the common people? I will also show that these combative writings were linked to others which preceded and followed them. Even if they were undoubtedly a massive shock for the councillors in charge of the city, these insurrectionary *placards* did not arrive out of the blue: it is possible to situate them within a chain of writings stretching over thirty years, but also to link them to words that the common people allowed themselves to utter, ‘hidden transcripts’ (Scott 1990), the sources of which were unveiled for a moment in time. Finally, I will study the reasons for their disappearance from local histories half a century after the event. To conclude, the effects on urban space (Castillo Gómez 2006) will be examined: what impact could the choice of the display mode have had, was there a reclaiming of the lost space by the authorities, and beyond that, can two information systems be pitted against each other?

I will not study a large number of manifestations of exposed writings, as I have done in part in other publications (Béroujon 2009). Instead, I seek here, on the basis of one case and its relation to others, to contribute to a history of the materiality of the written word and its meticulous contextualisation, in order to identify the effects of an object in terms of political and social history (Jouhaud and Viala 2002).

2. *Writing, Reading and Responding*

The text of the *placards* is known since it appears in the register of the minutes of the year 1528-1529 and in the large and imposing register copy, which varies slightly from the first register.⁵ However, the composition of the original *placards* copied into the consular registers is not available since it has not been preserved: what was the size of the *placards* and of the letters? What type of character was used? Although probably handwritten, can we nevertheless envisage a printed format, or a mixed format, opening with print and ending with a handwritten subscription? How legible was it? What was the visual device? There is nevertheless a titling effect in its inscription: it is addressed to the whole ‘commune’. And the subscription, which is accompanied by a final drawing, is also highlighted. We adopt here the first form of the text of the minutes:

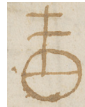
L'en fait assavoir a toutes gens de la commune de la ville de lion
Premierement a tous ceulx qui ont desir de soubstenir le bien publicq pour repugner la malice et fureur
des faulx usuriers plaise vous a avoir regard comme le destriment du blé nous tumble sus sans l'avoir
merité a cause de leurs greniers plains de blez lesquelz il veullent vendre a leur dernier mot ce que n'est

⁵ In particular at the end of the text: ‘du povre comme de ceste ville de lion’ (of the poor as well as of this city of Lyon), AML, BB47, 237v, and not, as at first, ‘de povre commune de ceste ville de lion’ (of poor commune of this city of Lyon), AML, BB46, 101v.

de raison et se dieu n'y met la main ilz fault en gecter en l'eau tant y en a Et aussi veu la grace dieu et la bonne disposition du temps et qu'il ne se fait nulz amas de blez pour la guerre Et en oultre que justice favorise avecques gouverneurs et conseillés usuriers et larrons y mettre ordre faignant user d'équité ilz nous rongent de jour en jour comme par verité le voyez devant voz yeulx advenir la cherté dudit blé et autres denrées qui est chose vile et infame par quoy a l'exemple des autres bonnes villes que toute la commune soit délibérée y mettre ordre telle que l'on fait au ble avant que l'on l'oste de la paille c'est que l'on le bat et escoux il nous fault faire ainsi a ces maulditz usuriers et a ceulx qui ont greniers et encherissent le blé. / Sachez que nous sommes de quatre a cinq cens hommes que nous sommes alliez faisons assavoir a tous les dessusdits qu'ilz aient a se trouver dimanche apres midy aux cordelliers pour donner conseil avec nous d'y mettre ordre et police et ce sans faulte pour l'utilité et prouffit de povre commune de ceste ville de lion et de moy

Ainsi subscript

Le povre⁶



⁶ (We make known to all the people of the commune of the city of Lyon Firstly to all those who have the desire to support the public good to repel the malice and fury of the false usurers, please have a look at how the lack of the wheat is falling on us without having deserved it because of their granaries full of wheat, which they want to sell at their last word what is not reasonable and if God does not put the hand on it it will be necessary to throw some in the water so much there is And thus given the grace of God and the good disposition of the weather and that no heap of wheat is made for the war And in addition that justice favours with people governors and consuls usurers and thieves to put order there, pretending to use equity they gnaw at us from day to day as by truth you see it before your eyes happening the dearness of the wheat and other commodities what is a vile and infamous thing by which with the example of the other *bonnes villes* (good cities) that all the commune is deliberated to put order there such as one makes with the corn before one removes it from the straw it is that one beats it and shakes it we must do thus with these damned usurers and with those which have granaries and raise the bid the corn. / Know that we are from four to five hundred men that we are allied, let us make it known to all the aforementioned that they have to be on Sunday afternoon at the cordeliers to give council with us to put there order and police and this without fail for the utility and profit of poor commune of this city of Lyon and of me Thus subscribed The poor).



Figure 1 – Ville de Lyon, Archives Municipales, BB46, 101r-101v. Licence ouverte 2.0

By holding the city's leaders and speculators responsible for the shortage and the high cost of wheat, by calling on everyone (who can fail to support the public good?) 'de mettre ordre' in public affairs, by giving a date for the following Sunday, by saying that a force is already in place and ready for the fight, the *placard* is an argument-driven call for insurrection. The venue for the meeting – the square by the Cordeliers convent – is fraught with threat, as it is situated in the heart of the peninsula, in the most working-class district of Lyon. What was the reaction of the authorities to these accusations and threats of violence and uprising? Nothing is said about a possible 'cleaning' of the poster sites by the councillors: it is possible that the consuls sent some men for this purpose and that they collected a certain number of posters, as happened in Spain (Castillo Gómez 2017). But more probably they were satisfied with collecting a few copies, either by their men or by themselves, given the lack of time and a police force. A few years later, this was how they became aware of new clandestine writings: 'ont esté rapportez deux placartz trouvez ...'⁷ For their part, passers-by were able to seize some of them for possible reading in small groups (perhaps indoors and in circles of trust?). The mention of 'plusieurs carrefours' (many crossroads) in the register shows in any case that the *placards* were widely disseminated across the city;⁸ this is also attested by the historian Symphorien Champier, who published these details shortly after the events: 'les tilletz qu'ilz avoient miz & affichez par les places et carfourc' (Champier 1884, 40).⁹ Otherwise unspecified high traffic areas and gathering points are targeted without further information: this is a classic method of posting clandestine writings in the most visible places. A century later in Geneva (Barat 2019-2020), the practices of clandestine posting were described in detail: it involved notes being hung on the pillars and doors of buildings, stuck in the joints of shop benches, attached to a bell, and stuck or scattered in the streets.

In Lyon, the posting was probably done during the night between Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 April 1529, with the *placard* being discovered in the early morning and subsequently taken down, transported and read at the town hall, the venue for consular meetings. Despite the absence of any explicit mention of the reception of this placard, it is possible to measure the responses to the display, in other words to constitute the action as a reading key: on Sunday 18 April, in the early afternoon 'apres-disner' (after dinner), a time when business was normally at a standstill, the councillors met as a matter of urgency to decide on a first series of measures.¹⁰ Only five of them were at the meeting, though there were 12 elected representatives and at least 7 were usually present. But given the urgency of the situation they had to make do with those present on what was a day off and favourable to gatherings and collective discussions after Mass, undoubtedly chosen to this end by the authors of the posters. The first measures that were taken – blocked price of bread, a ban on grain exports, the obligation to quickly bring in wheat from Burgundy, and the opening of the granaries of private individuals – show the seriousness given to the core complaint, i.e. the accusation of collusion between the various authorities (councillors, men of justice and governor) and the wheat merchants, suspected of stocking up on wheat in order to raise prices and enrich themselves by maintaining a fake shortage. A classic accusation and an equally classic response, of course, but one that cannot be brushed aside too quickly: it came at a very particular time, after a series of setbacks in dealing with the people's expectation of a management system attentive to the fair price of grain (Kaplan 1986; Thompson 1988; Montenach 2009).

⁷ AML, BB63, 168, April 1545 (two *placards* have been found and brought back ...).

⁸ At the time, *plusiers* meant 'many, numerous' in French (Furetière 1690, 157).

⁹ (the bills they had put up & posted in the squares and crossroads).

¹⁰ AML, BB47, 231.

For eight months, the activities of the councillors were essentially focused on the regulation of grain: they expected a bumper harvest in the summer of 1528 and let wheat circulate liberally in April, May and again at the end of July 1528; but obviously the new harvest was insufficient and quickly, from the month of August onwards, the consulate had to look for ways to deal with the shortage and high prices. When reading the consular registers kept between 1528 and 1529, three main issues stand out: the regulation and search for wheat; the ransom of the royal children held hostage in Spain, with Lyon being asked to contribute a very large sum, which the councillors had to raise; and the buyback of the *gabelles* farm (tax on foodstuffs and raw materials consumed in the city) that the city had lost. The first issue, which saw several men from the consulate go to court with the town secretary, eventually led, on 21 January 1529, to the granting of permission to do a trade deal with neighbouring Burgundy, the granary of the Lyonnais. However, the consulate, which had been lobbying the court intensively for three months to obtain this agreement, backed down a few days later: on 31 January, having already sent one of its own men to Auxonne to collect and transport the wheat, it yielded this right to the merchants who wanted to take advantage of it.¹¹ Instead, it decided to put all its financial effort into the *gabelles*.¹² During the fifteen days preceding the poster, the first fortnight of April 1529, the councillors allowed wheat to go out, in spite of the prohibitions which they had set up, justifying it in the register of municipal deliberations by the fact that the granaries of the city were full ('il y en a en cete ville assez bonne quantité dieu grace',¹³ the secretary wrote on 5 April) and that a relaxation of the rules would encourage the farmers and the wheat merchants to return to the Lyon markets.

Tensions must therefore have been high on Sunday 18 April among the councillors present at the crisis meeting. The consuls were traditionally responsible for the smooth running of the urban market, and in particular for ensuring an equitable price for bread so that the poorest could eat. However, the posters say that the markets were not busy and that the price of a *bichet* (measure) of wheat had risen,¹⁴ even though there is nothing in the records to indicate a major concern about wheat (the meetings in April were overwhelmingly concerned with the question of buying back the *gabelles*), nor any shortages or high prices in the days leading up to 18 April.¹⁵ Did the councillors forget to bail out the Grenette market (the public grain market) to bring prices down? Did they think that the critical threshold had not yet been reached? Similarly, the insults 'larrons' (thieves) and 'usuriers' (usurers), the traditional figures of infamy, regularly targeted by sermons (Todeschini 2015), were cause for concern, while the choice of the basis of the new tax (to pay the royal ransom) would have particularly affected the common people (it would be levied on both landlords and tenants – and since officers had just finished collecting tax information from residents, there must have been some apprehension) as well as the fact that the debt taken out in March with brokers had to be paid or renewed.¹⁶

¹¹ AML, BB47, 194.

¹² Recently acquired by Robert Albisse, whom the councillors made out to be a dangerous stranger in their records, but who had been a councillor himself some years before.

¹³ AML, BB47, 224 (there is in this city a rather good quantity of it god grace).

¹⁴ In previous years it was eight to ten *sols*, in October 1528 it was 15-16 *sols*, at least 20 *sols* in March, and 34 *sols* on 2 May (consular registers).

¹⁵ The town rented granaries to store the 750 *emines* of wheat (about 1,500 donkey loads) brought from Burgundy in February by an eminent former councillor, Henri Gimbre; two whole boats were unloaded by the merchant Ducournal.

¹⁶ For the purchase of the *gabelle* farm, at 3% from Galle against the usual average rate that R. Gascon establishes at 1% (1971, 250).

In the week following the posting and while the accusations in the *placard* were permeating through the population, the increase in the search for wheat in the town, the decision to send emissaries to Burgundy and Dauphiné to bring in corn, and the attempted desertion of certain members of the town council, who were harshly called to order by the others, marked a rise in tension as the deadline drew near. On Saturday, the day before the planned uprising, the councillors marshalled their forces by summoning the 41 *quarteniers*, i.e., the leaders of the town's militia, mainly craftsmen. They gave them a firm speech, asking them, among other things, to be ready for the riot. The next day at noon, the Place des Cordeliers was flooded with people (300 to 400 men according to the court witnesses, 1000 to 1200 in the consular registers, 2000 according to Champier), and the *quarteniers* and their troops of *dizainiers* (neighbourhood police) did nothing to prevent this. If we read about the event in the municipal deliberation register, the looting was far from indiscriminate, contrary to what several historians have written (for example Gascon 1961, 97-98): the gangs of rioters directed their attention in particular towards the houses of the members of the consulate and their close circle. Although the secretary did not mention this, as he obviously did not want to make explicit causal links, the names and functions of the figures concerned make it possible to reconstruct this: two former consuls still frequently called in as *notables* for important decisions, the emissary of the consulate who had just been to negotiate for wheat in Burgundy, an agent of the *gabelles*, a wheat merchant who was meant to supply the town according to the arrangement made with the consulate (the only one to be taken to prison by the rioters, a strong symbolic act of the restoration of justice), the town secretary, the town prosecutor and the caretaker who kept the consular archives.¹⁷ These powerful people and their staff were all involved in decisions concerning wheat. However, they were not the only ones to be molested. As in any uprising, the gangs operated with order and disorder (Wood 2007, 151), and if the names of the people mentioned are not surprising, this is also because the consuls, who controlled the writing of the registers (Fargeix 2007), wanted to highlight the scandal of the attack against these elites. Beyond the names mentioned, other Lyonnais were targeted by the rioters ('plusieurs autres maisons' [many other houses], 'méchanceté dudit populaire qui continua jusques à la nuyt').¹⁸

The text of the poster was copied under the date of Sunday 25 April, followed by an account of the three days of rioting. But when was this writing actually done? On Tuesday 27 April, when the consular meetings restarted in a place of refuge? Or later? In any case, it is only after the threat it bore had been realised that the *placard* was noted. It was only registered by the authorities once the rebellion had been recorded. We can thus discern several levels in this copying within a book jealously guarded by the consuls in their archives. It gave a performative function to the *placard*. It must also have served as evidence in future trials against the rebels. And it kept alive the memory of the accusatory violence suffered by the consuls and served as a warning to their successors. Was it intended to calm or, conversely, reactivate the emotion of councillors taking office? One comment stands out from the register: the town was well managed, it was not short of

¹⁷ Respectively described as 'Symphorien Champier docteur médecin' (Symphorien Champier doctor), 'honorable hommes Humbert et Henri Gimbre frères marchans et bourgeois gens riches et des apparans de ladite ville' (honourable men Humbert and Henri Gimbre brothers merchants and burghers rich people and of the apparents of the aforementioned city), 'Pierre Morin', 'Laurent Ducournal patissier et tavernier riche homme opulant en biens fort bien meublé' (Laurent Ducournal pastrycook and tavern-keeper rich man opulent in goods very well furnished), the 'secrétaire du consulat' (secretary of the consulate), Claude Granier (who was absent from his house at the time), the 'procureur de la ville' (town prosecutor) François Fournier (who was also absent), and the 'consierge' (caretaker) of the town hall and keeper of the archives (AML, BB47, 238-239).

¹⁸ AML, BB47, f. 239 (meanness of the people which continued until the night).

grain ('et ne fault entendre que ce fust par faulte de blez'),¹⁹ and it was the injustice of the rioters that was emphasised. As if the dazed consuls were still looking for a good reason for the revolt.

How was the *placard* perceived by the townspeople? One statement (the only one, the reaction of a group of men), shows that the preparation and displaying of the poster was a key, almost heroic moment. On 4 May, the day when the witnesses to the riot were interviewed, two masons testified. However, they talked not about the riot, but about the *placard* event and its repercussions:

le jour saint George 23 d'avril dernier, estans ensemble devant Saint-Nizier survenit ung nommé Guillot Jardin masson, demourant en rue thomassin, avec plusieurs autres, desquelz ils n'ont congnoissance, lesquels tombarent sur le propoz des placards mys et apposez par la ville contre mons. le gouverneur, mess. de la justice, et conseillers, disant iceulx Boteront et Caryé qu'ilz s'esbaysoient qui avoit fait et posé iceulx placars, lequel Jardin respondit qu'il savoit bien qui c'estoit, et que c'estoit ung sien beau-frère. (Guigue and Guigue 1886, 276-277)²⁰

Boastfulness? We do not know who this brother-in-law was; we merely have the profession of the person who, according to the witnesses, was doing the bragging, a mason, and his address, rue Thomassin, located in the heart of the printing district of Lyon. Was this brother-in-law a printer in this district? Did he write, copy or print and then put up the *placards*, or did he simply take part in their production? What is certain is that five days after it was posted, the *placard* was the talk of the town, bringing together discussion groups from backgrounds that were not very literate, which however did not prevent them from debating. Discussion took place in the street, in front of the church of Saint-Nizier, and therefore just next to the town hall where the consuls met. The atmosphere seems to have become so heated that the proximity of the powerful and their symbols had no deterrent effect. The masons, discussing this incendiary *placard*, were caught between astonishment and admiration ('amazed'). The poster, summed up in a lapidary manner as a charge against all the authorities, had spread throughout the city. Was it passed from hand to hand, hidden in pockets? Was it seen or read? Or was it merely summarised, as here? Were those who posted it the first to 'find' it and pass it around (Barat 2019-2020, 25)? It incubated and fuelled debate, posed and raised questions about its author. It must also have led to decisions: to join or not to join, to leave, to barricade oneself in, decisions that might mutate according to the circles and moments involved. Anticipation of the event, whether fearful or impatient, must have been strong for all.

Following the denunciation of witnesses, ten days after the uprising, the consulate promised a large reward (paid 'sans difficulté' – without difficulty) and protection to those who reported the names of the anonymous authors of the *placards*.²¹

3. *The Anonymity of the Placard*

Who was behind the poster? The authorities did not find out,²² and we can only conjecture: 'quatre a cinq cens hommes' (four to five hundred men) signed under a common name, *The*

¹⁹ AML, BB47, 239 (it should not be understood that it was for lack of wheat).

²⁰ (On Saint George's day, 23rd of April last, in front of Saint-Nizier, a mason named Guillot Jardin, living in rue Thomassin, with several others, of whom they have no knowledge, came across the placards put up and affixed by the city against the governor, gentlemen of justice, and councillors, saying Boteront and Caryé that they were amazed who had made and put up these placards, to which Jardin replied that he knew well who it was, and that it was one of his brothers-in-law).

²¹ AML, BB47, 6 May 1529, 248.

²² At least at the beginning, until 1531, when a clerk is named as its author, but no further details are known (see below).

poor: these words suggest the popular masses in a then densely populated city of about 50,000 inhabitants. The clear demarcation (the binary structure of a text articulated around us/them – ‘nous’/‘ils’, ‘eux’, ‘leurs’), the phenomena of repetition and emphasis (‘usuriers’ and ‘commune’ appear three times) and the classic pattern of monopolisation refer to an argumentative base that was undoubtedly familiar to the majority of the population (making it immediately striking), resulting initially in an indistinct populace. This is the dominant interpretation as given by Symphorien Champier, a witness and victim of the riot: a social confrontation between the councillors and the rogue artisans, ‘ung tas de populaire’ (1884, 33).²³ The world of the small against the world of the big.

The use, by the revolt leaders, of the signature ‘The Poor’ is also attested elsewhere; for instance, the insurgents in the English North in 1536-1537 claimed to be led by ‘Captain Poverty’ (Wood 2007, 176). Similarly, the ‘commune’ was widely used as a rallying banner: the notion was a flagship for other revolt movements in the late Middle Ages and early modernity – the *comunidad* in Spain, the *Gemeinde* of the Peasants’ War in the Holy Roman Empire, the ‘Commonwealth’ against enclosures, again in association with poverty. ‘Le povre’ in the signature thus takes on a very strong collective popular dimension, and it is possible, as historians have done since the end of the nineteenth century, to interpret the final wording (text and drawing) as a rebus, the cruciferous globe being related to the world: ‘le pauvre monde’ (the poor world).²⁴

By calling on ‘toutes gens de la commune’, the author of the *placard* is perhaps trying to stir the memory of the riot, also called *rebeyne*, which began on Easter Monday, 9 April 1436, and lasted until June 1436, when an assembly of up to 2,000 people, gathered this time with the approval of the consulate, attempted to confront the King’s tax demands and triggered the revolt – which was finally put down. The notables and *terriers* (group of wealthy rentiers) had demanded that ‘everyone’ be invited (Fédou 1958, 141). The venue for the meeting, also the Cordeliers, echoed this. But beyond this insurrectionary episode, the notion of ‘commune’ resonated more widely, in the sense of those who care about the common good and who are not reducible to a small economic elite. And, although direct democracy never existed at the beginning of the Lyon commune, at the turn of the fourteenth century, the city’s government was nevertheless able to recruit more widely than in 1529. The comparison with ‘les autres bonnes villes’ (the other good cities), given as an example by the author of the *placard*, also served as a point of reference to show that elsewhere in the kingdom of France, powerful cities continued to bring together all the heads of families, not exactly to deliberate but to give their consent to serious measures (Chevalier 1982, 208). This anchoring in the space of the kingdom and in the past (the custom) was to serve as a benchmark and a spur to revolt.

Was the ‘commune’, however, in the spirit of the *placard*, reducible to the world below, to the ‘peuple menu’ (small people)? This is not certain. But those who responded to the appeal launched by the *placard* were partly from it: they were the ones singled out by the consulate: ‘menu peuple povres mesnagers serviteurs femmes et enfants de quinze à vingt ans’.²⁵ And one of the first to be arrested and hanged was a ‘joueur d’épée’ (sword player – whether a professional swordsman or a circus performer, definitely a man of the small people). If the *placard* reached beyond them, it did not prevent the common people from appropriating its content. The words reported by witnesses during the riot point in the same direction: that of a fusion

²³ (a bunch of popular people).

²⁴ Steyert 1899, perhaps influenced in this interpretation by the 1534 *placard* against the Mass where ‘le pauvre monde’ (the poor world) is spelt out several times.

²⁵ AML, BB47, 238 (lowly people, poor householders, servants, women and children aged fifteen to twenty).

between the political imaginary and social data. A spectator said he heard ‘Vela la Commune qui s’avance contre les gros accapareurs de ceste ville’.²⁶ The ‘Commune’ here were all the underprivileged,²⁷ including women, whereas the poster targeted a virile, male world. It is clear here that its reception constituted ‘appropriations that transform, reformulate and exceed what they receive’ (Chartier 1990, 30), a strong expectation of the top-down reversal that was now taking shape thanks to the written word. The graphic sign at the foot of the poster features a double cross, like the one set in the middle of the Hôtel Dieu in Lyon, which was responsible for assisting the sick poor. Taken as a whole, the sign of the globe and the cross may represent the Christ of the Last Judgement.²⁸ Indeed, it is for social justice that the *placard* calls. Power (omnipotence? – the *Reichsapfel*, imperial orb) of the Poor of God. In the *Bundschuh* revolts, the banner with the laced peasant shoe embroidered on the flags of the insurgents was sometimes accompanied by the motto ‘Rien que la justice de Dieu’ (Deschamp 2016, 108).²⁹ The poor man and the sign of the cross and the globe brought to mind notions of social justice, love for one’s neighbour and charity in the face of practices deemed unjust and abusive.

But if the rhetoric of the *placard* as a political critique of power was shared and not specific to a much more educated group, its production on the other hand implied a certain level of wealth and education. Wealth was needed in order to obtain paper and ink, to employ a pool of copyists or a printer, and to recruit the poster men if accomplices did not take on the task themselves; the argumentation also required a certain education, since it was written in a French that alternated between scholarly and popular registers (for example in the image of the wheat being threshed, which also referred to the well-known biblical metaphor of separating the wheat from the chaff). Were the printers hiding behind this anonymity? There were many of them in Lyon, which already had a solid printing tradition dating back some fifty years to when the first printworks were established. They were grouped in official and unofficial brotherhoods, lively brotherhoods of craftsmen that the councillors intended to ban two months after the revolt. Beyond the rebus, the cruciferous globe that accompanies the signature may also allude to the traditional marks of merchants and craftsmen, to the world of trades and in particular to the printing trades, whose marks frequently combined the double-cross and the T-world on their title pages. The figures for the typographic marks of Nicolas de Benedictis, Guillaume Boullé, Jean Clein, François and Constantin Fradin, Jacques Juinta, Louis Martin, Guillaume de Millis, Jacques Sacon and Barthelemy Trot are very similar to the one on the *placard*. A rare trade absent from the representation of the masters of the trade (called to elect the consulate and mandated during exceptional assemblies), printing was a world wracked by anxiety, whose companions were organised as a force for social opposition (Davis 1979a). The final threat of the *placard*, ‘nous sommes de quatre à cinq cens hommes’, is strangely close to

²⁶ Guigue and Guigue 1886, 263 (Here is the Commune advancing against the big monopolists of this city).

²⁷ In his *Histoire de notre temps* (1552), the historian Guillaume Paradin spoke of the ‘Communes’ to designate the insurgent lower classes (660). At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the term ‘Commune’ was mostly used in this sense: in his study of the Croquants’ revolts, Y.-M. Bercé notes that the term was socially marked (1986, 13). In 1690, Furetière’s dictionary consecrated this meaning, which had become dominant: ‘Commune: Le menu peuple. La Commune s’esmeut facilement. Les Magistrats ne peuvent pas retenir la Commune’ (Commune: The small people. The Commune was easily stirred up. The Magistrates cannot hold back the Commune). This connotation of subaltern communities in confrontation with the municipal oligarchy is attested to as early as the Middle Ages, as the negative of the *universitas* of medieval jurists, even if it is not the only meaning of the word (Barrio Barrio 2014; Dumolyn 2014).

²⁸ As, for example, the image in the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, 1415-1425, Kanonie sv. Petra a Pavla 80, 44v.

²⁹ (Nothing but God’s justice).

another notation, written ten years later by the book workers in the middle of a strike: ‘nous sommes quatre ou cinq cents pauvres compagnons imprimeurs’ (Davis 1989, 321).³⁰ Could this have been a reworking of the insurrectionary *placard*? This is at least a possibility in this writing, supporting the journeymen printers’ desire for social justice and intended for the Parliament of Paris, especially since the term ‘alliez’ (allied) in the poster resonates with the oaths taken and the clandestine nature of the brotherhood of book workers.



Figure 2 – Some Lyon printers’ marks from between 1510 and 1530. Title pages: *Opera Sallustiana*, Lyon, Jean Clein, 1528 (Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon, Rés. B509779). Licence ouverte 2.0; *Legenda Sanctorum*, Lyon, Constantin Fradin, n.d. (BML, Chomarat A13684). Courtesy of Michel Chomarat

Another hypothesis, relating the *placard* to jurists, is an easier path to follow. The accusation of collusion between the rulers and the wheat merchants suggests the political factions who had good knowledge of consular decisions, in particular the latest decisions taken, as did the men of the secular court (that of the archbishop, which still had precedence over the royal court). The vocabulary of the poster is of the kind used by men of justice in particular (‘bien public’ – public good –, ‘équité’, ‘utilité et profit’, ‘ordre et police’ – equity, utility and profit, order and police) and suggests opposing factions and a political battle for power, factional competition that could generate discussion and critical thinking among a wide audience (de Vivo 2007). The final subscription (‘ainsi souscrit’ – thus subscribed), which gives solemnity to the act, mimics notarial formulas, even in its association of the signature with the cruciform sign resembling a notarial seal. It is possible that the poster was made by one or more legal practitioners. The double crossbars of the cross suggests the archdiocese. Its clerks had caused ripples in Novem-

³⁰ (we are four or five hundred poor companion printers).

ber 1528, when they went to the consulate to denounce the bad wheat management and the corruption of one of the councillors. Etienne Savary, prosecutor at the secular court:

a product ... un mémoire commençant advertissemens ... en oultre a requis estre commis ung procureur pour le populaire attendu que Me François Fournier procureur general de la ville a esté chargé par Antoine Lacte d'avoir retiré en sa maison certaines caisses plaines de blez lesquelles contre les défenses de non tirer ble hors de la ville furent arrestées par les commis de la ville au pont du Rosne ...³¹

The consulate, although forced to appoint this popular prosecutor, a few days later denounced Savary and 'certains autres procureurs de la cour séculière'³² who had asked to check the accounts of the 'rêve', i.e. the tax on the movement of goods, in particular on grain exits, and addressed its remonstrances to the archbishop, the governor and the seneschal against the 'entreprises ... pour esmouvoir à sédition de peuple'.³³ In February 1529, a few days after backing down on the wheat trade deal with Burgundy, it excluded from consular assemblies everyone who had not been explicitly invited.³⁴ It then recommended the utmost confidentiality in the negotiations for the purchase of the *gabelles*, trying to curb the leak of information.³⁵ But in 1528, by multiplying the assemblies (of *notables*, *terriers* and masters of trades, and general assemblies) to deal with the royal ransom, the consulate had itself widened the audience for public affairs: up to 160 people whose opinions were heard.³⁶

Craftsmen and men of justice in coalition, seeking a mass mobilisation against the rulers? This is what had happened a decade earlier, when the 'poor' were already mentioned in anonymous libels.

4. Chain of Writing

In April 1515, two anonymous letters addressed to the councillors were found at the consulate, in the same place on the gallery of the common hotel but a few days apart. The first letter reads as follows:

A noz seigneurs les conseillers et gouverneurs de la cité de Lyon. Seigneurs consulz qui avez la charge de la chose publique et qui devez estre soigneux du prouffit et sollagement de povre peuple pour Dieu ne souffriez faire une si grand playe à la ville que pour remplir cinq ou six meschans larrons, trestres et susseurs du sang des povres tout votre populaire soit mys à perpétuel pouvreté et indigence et emploiez

³¹ AML, BB47, 4 November 1528, 149v (produced ... a memorandum beginning warnings ...; moreover required to be committed a prosecutor for the popular whereas Master François Fournier general prosecutor of the city was charged by Antoine Lacte to have withdrawn in his house certain boxes full of corn which against the defenses not to draw corn out of the city were stopped by the clerks of the city at the bridge of the Rhône ...).

³² AML, BB47, 4 November 1528, 157 (certain other procurators of the secular court).

³³ AML, BB47, 12 November, 157-158 (undertakings ... to stir up sedition of the people).

³⁴ AML, BB47, 1 February 1529, 195: 'doresnavant nully ne assistera... au consulat fors que messieurs conseillers procureur général et secrétaire de la ville sinon que par expres il y soit appelé et retenu par mesdits seigneurs les conseillers' (From now on, no one will attend ... the consulate apart from the councillors, the public prosecutor and the secretary of the town, unless they are expressly called and retained by my lords the councillors).

³⁵ AML, BB47, 15 March 1529, 216: to hold ready the 15,000 l. for the repurchase of the farm of the *gabelles*, 'affin de obvier à quelque trouble que pourroit survenir si la chose estoit manifeste ... pour autant qu'elle est de grosse conséquence ..., aussi que ceste matière n'a mestier d'estre devulguee de peur de quelque empeschement' (in order to obviate some trouble which could arise if the thing were known ... insofar as it is of great consequence ..., also that this matter should not be disclosed for fear of some impediment).

³⁶ AML, BB47, 29 April 1528, 6v-9.

notre bon chevalier et gouverneur Jehan Jaques et si vous et luy n'estes assez fors, nous aurons fer, feu et eau et cueur pour en faire l'exécution si après qu'il en sera perpétuel mémoire et notez notez et notez. Et au dessoubz par v. pe follé et destruit.³⁷

The second letter:

Messieurs, Messieurs, vous ne tenez compte de l'aide que vous avons offert et tenez votre conseil sans nous appeller, auquel savez bien que l'en veult excuser ces larrons de la substance et sang du povre peuple, il n'y a regnard, lou ne autre de ses complices que ne facons finir de mort amère s'ilz ne rendent tout tout et tout ce qu'ilz ont robbé et trompé la communauté de povre populaire et qu'ilz ne laissent leurs années entreprinse des draps de soye et savons très bien qui sont les trompeurs et les larrons. Noble sieur mareschal et vous conseillers tenez bon pour votre povre peuple ... V.P.P.D.L [Votre Povre Peuple De Lyon].³⁸

As has already been well demonstrated (Gascon 1971; Fargeix 2007), the tax issue (silk cloth farm) concealed more general problems. These two letters arrived in a poisonous climate of accusations concerning the falsification of the city's accounts and at a time when a party, the craftsmen's party, was being formed. This party was initially led by jurists and wealthy merchants, who were on the doorstep of power; they asked, a few days after the discovery of the letters, to leave the co-optation electoral system by allowing the craftsmen to designate by themselves the masters who would be electors of the councillors (the system was in fact locked since the consuls appointed the masters of the trades and *terriers* who had to elect them). The town council was then made up of major merchants, clothiers, silk merchants, grocers and, secondarily, lawyers. Since 1490, no new families had entered the town council. The city had become a commercial and banking capital; its four fairs were re-established in 1494 and the consulate became the emanation of this merchant oligarchy which sequestered power through a few large families. Following the first charge made by the anonymous libels, the demands became clearer and more powerful. The leaders of the faction took the name 'procureur des artisans' (prosecutor of craftsmen) and 'procureur des habitants' (prosecutor of inhabitants), and the media mobilised in their struggle included the concept of a satirical show (a farce against the councillors, intended to brighten up the queen's entrance in 1516, which was immediately banned by the consuls), but also insults and verbal interruptions at solemn moments when all the Lyonnais were gathered, such as the proclamation of the election of new consuls each December – interruptions which their authors asked to be recorded.

Public writing thus returned in 1518 with a higher degree of visibility when Jean Gautier, a rich apothecary at the head of the discontented, had an epitaph engraved on a tomb in the

³⁷ Quotation in Fargeix 2007, 488. (To our lords the councillors and governors of the city of Lyon. Lords consuls who have the responsibility of the public thing and who must be careful of the profit and relief of poor people for God, do not suffer to make such a great plague to the city that to fill five or six wicked thieves, traitors and suckers of the blood of the poor all your people be put to perpetual poverty and indigence, and employ our good knight and governor Jehan Jaques and if you and he are not strong enough, we will have iron, fire and water and heart to make the execution of it to the point that it will be perpetual memory of it and note note and note. And below by y[our] pe[ople] trampled and destroyed).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 489 (Gentlemen, gentlemen, you do not take into account the help we have offered you and hold your council without calling us, where you know well that one wants to excuse these thieves from the substance and blood of the poor people, there is no fox, wolf nor other of his accomplices that we do not make finish of bitter death if they do not return all all and all that they have stolen and deceived the community of poor people and that they do not leave their damned company of silk sheets and know very well who are the deceivers and the thieves. Noble lord marshal and you advisors, hold fast to your poor people V.P.P.D.L [Your Poor People of Lyon]).

church of Saint-Nizier (Fargeix 2007, 516). It read, among other things, that he was ‘Procureur contre ceulx qui ont osté à la chose publicque’.³⁹ In response, the councillors requested that the inscription be modified so that ‘qu’il soit escript en sondit épitaffe qu’il a esté et est contre la chose publicque de ceste ville, ou en quelque autre lieu publicq affin qu’il en soit mémoyre perpétuelle’.⁴⁰ The judgement handed down a few years later, in the great days of Auvergne, proved them right; it ordered: ‘suppression de l’inscription suivante tracée, à la suite de son nom, sur la tombe de Jean Gautier, apothicaire: Procureur au bon office des habitans artisans de Lion, contre tous ceulx qui par intention vont contre droit de la chose publique’ (Rolle 1865, 19)⁴¹.

The craftsmen’s prosecutor had set his sights high: the church of Saint-Nizier was the place where new consuls were elected and proclaimed, the place where consular meetings were sometimes held, where the town archives had previously been kept in the adjoining chapel, and last but not least, the church was situated opposite the town hall.

It is in relation to these precedents that the *placards* of 1529 must be understood: the method of electing consuls had already been questioned and compared with a golden age in which the whole population would have been consulted; the terms ‘thieves’ and ‘usurers’, and the idea of defending the ‘public thing’ had already left their mark on the town – first confidentially, then much more visibly in a public place over three years (unless the epitaph had been hidden from view during this time. Where was it? In a side chapel, or in the nave?). The defence of the people and the poor by procurators reminiscent of the official institution of the Procurator of the Poor in the fourteenth century (Gonthier 1978) was agitated. The revival of a ‘procureur du populaire’ (people’s procurator) in November 1528 must therefore have greatly concerned the consuls.⁴² The public posting of April 1529, amplified by a significant number of exposed *placards* signed by a full and complete entity which no longer referred to the consular authority (‘the poor’ had lost the possessive ‘your poor’ that attached it to the consulate, whose reason for being was, on the contrary, questioned – and it was no longer written in the acronym form ‘VPPDL’), and followed by the revolt, could only result in repression. This repression was commensurate not only with the fear aroused by the looting itself but also with the series of acts of protest committed in the months or even years that preceded it. The causal chain, running over fifteen years, was registered by the councillors themselves a few years later.⁴³ Faced

³⁹ AML, BB37, 152v, quotation in Fargeix 2007, 516 (prosecutor against those who have taken away from the public thing).

⁴⁰ AML, BB37, 152v-153, quotation in Fargeix 2007, 518 (it be written in his epitaph that he was and is against the public thing of this city, or in some other public place so that it may be remembered in perpetuity).

⁴¹ (suppression of the following inscription traced, following his name, on the tomb of Jean Gautier, apothecary: prosecutor to the good office of the inhabitants craftsmen of Lyon, against all those who by intention go against the law of the public thing).

⁴² One of the former leaders of the 1515-1520 rebellion, Pierre Sirodes, reappears in the consular registers at the end of 1528, without it being known whether this affair (settling the still unresolved question of the fines owed by Sirodes and the consulate) had any link with the 1529 revolt (AML, BB47, 3 December 1528, 163v).

⁴³ In 1534, in admonishing a private individual who refused the tax, they say that it is ‘[ce n’est] chose nouvelle que de veoir aucuns particuliers murmurer... parce qu’il y a quelques temps qu’une partie du populaire dudict Lyon, appelez les artisans, voulurent imposer ausdits conseillers plusieurs malversations touchant les deniers à eulx octroyez par le Roy; et fut l’issue de leur poursuite si malheureuse pour eux qu’ilz furent condamnez par arrest à faire amendes honorables’ (not a new thing to see some private individuals murmuring ... , because some time ago a part of the people of Lyon, called the craftsmen, wanted to impose on the aforementioned councillors several embezzlements relating to the money granted to them by the King; and the outcome of their pursuit was so unfortunate for them that they were condemned by decree to make honourable fines). For three years now, the consuls add, ‘se sont trouvez en ladite ville plusieurs mutins et séditieux, lesquelx ont pillé, saccaigé des plus apparentes maisons de ladicte ville, et mis les conseillers et gouverneurs d’icelle en dangier de leur vie’ (several mutineers and seditionists

with what may have been a resurgence of the old artisans' party, the gallows and exemplary punishments marked the accounts of the consulate throughout 1529. However, they did not completely calm the agitation in Lyon.

Anonymous writing was once again mobilised against the councillors a year later, and was also displayed in public:⁴⁴ within a context of recurring plague, wheat shortages and an influx of people from the countryside, on Sunday 23 October 1530 a *placard* was found 'apposé à la porte du couvent saint bonaventure [les Cordeliers] ceste nuyt lequel a esté prins par le provost et baillé audit sieur Levyn conseiller'.⁴⁵ Nothing more is said about it except that it contained 'entre autres choses menasses à messieurs de la justice et conseillers avec grosses parolles injurieuses';⁴⁶ the next day it was exhibited and read to the various judicial authorities (secular court and royal court) whom the consulate asked to 's'enquérir par tous moyens s'il est possible trouver le personnage qui a fait ledit placard affin que pugnition en soit faicte'.⁴⁷ During the general assembly called in its wake by the town council, several notables demanded that the real culprits of the sedition of 1529 be prosecuted (Denis Thurin, for example: 'il y a encore quelques coupables attendu le placard ainsi mis et apposé dernièrement'⁴⁸).

A week later, again on a Sunday, 30 October, and again at the door of the Cordeliers – not one but several *placards* were found 'à la porte de l'esglise saint bonaventure qui ont esté veuz et leuz au bureau contenans plusieurs parolles blasphematoires mesmement contre messieurs de l'esglise et aussi contre la justice et conseillers de la ville'.⁴⁹ Doubtless there were others in the days that followed: on Thursday 3 November, an abruptly ended entry in the consular register states that 'pour ce que journallement aucuns seducteurs mectent des placardz parmy la ville tendans à sedition et emouvoir le peuple contre les gens d'esglise de justice et conseillers de la ville'.⁵⁰ Six months later, on Wednesday 10 May 1531, the consular register records a fresh occurrence:

monsr pomponis de trevulce a mandé parler à luy messrs les conseillers ... esquels il a dit que monsre le marechal gouverneur luy a dit qu'il est besoing faire faire une crie que celluy qui declarera qui a planté et affigé un placard commencent Monsieur le comte de saint jehan vers saone derrière la maison de l'archevêché de lion aura cent escus d'estrenne.⁵¹

Again, the content of the poster is omitted.

Since the salvo of *placards* in October and November 1530, however, repression had resumed in earnest. The printers were in the consulate's sights. A 'Jean Balsarin', banished in June 1529

have been found in the said town, who have pillaged and ransacked the most visible houses in the said town and put the councillors and governors of the town in danger of their lives) (AML, CC359, quoted in Rolle 1865, 274).

⁴⁴ Henri Hauser quoted these resurgences (1896, 301-303).

⁴⁵ AML, BB49, 209 (affixed to the door of the convent of Saint Bonaventure [i.e. the Cordeliers] this day, which was taken by the provost and given to the councillor, Sir Levyn).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* (among other things, threats to gentlemen of justice and councillors with large insulting words).

⁴⁷ AML, BB49, 210v (inquire by all means if it is possible to find the person who made the said *placard* so that punishment may be meted out).

⁴⁸ AML, BB49, 216 (there are still some culprits awaiting the placard thus placed and affixed recently).

⁴⁹ AML, BB49, 225 (at the door of the church of Saint Bonaventure which were seen and read in the office containing several blasphemous words, even against the gentlemen of the church and also against the justice and councillors of the town).

⁵⁰ AML, BB49, 227 (for what some seducers daily put up placards around the town tending to seduce and stir up the people against the clergymen, the justice system and the councillors of the town).

⁵¹ AML, BB49, 276v (mr pomponis de trevulce [the governor] mandated to speak to him mrs the councillors ... to whom he said that monsre le marechal governor told him that it is necessary to make a cry that the one who will declare who planted and affixed a placard beginning Mister the count of Saint Jean next Saone behind the house of the archbishopric of Lyon will have a hundred ecus of étrenne).

(Guigue and Guigue 1886, 292), was perhaps one of the sons of the printer Guillaume Balsarin: Jacques Balsarin, also called Jean, was not mentioned again after 1529 and his brother, Bonin, left the city to print in Grenoble at that date (Baudrier and Baudrier 1964, 35-71). On several occasions in October 1530, the printers were targeted for forming bands that marched day and night, consisting of 'grant membre de gens tant estrangers que autres'.⁵² Everything pointed to their being the troublemakers. It was a mobile population, welcoming workers from all over Europe and composed of travelling companions able to make comparisons and take up the signs, gestures and rallying devices that marked political, social and religious revolts throughout Europe at the time. None of the Lyon printers were arrested for the 1530 affair of the seditious notes, and it is not known whether they were behind it (it was not specified that the posters were printed), but some, such as Pierre de Vingle, migrated to Geneva or Neuchâtel; there the latter published the 1534 *placard* against the Mass, which immediately became famous.

On the other hand, the 'clercs', religious and lay lawmen forming a large and diverse class in Lyon (Fédou 1964, 375), few of whom were victims of the first repression (only one clerk had been banished in 1529), were actively sought: in the Roannais region, a clerk, Simon Girard, was prosecuted in January 1531 for being the author of the 1529 *placards* that were the 'cause de la sédition' (Guigue and Guigue 1886, 419) (cause of the sedition); the 'procureur du populaire' Etienne Savary, who had fled from Lyon after the riot, was also arrested in March 1531,⁵³ in Saint-Julien in the county of Burgundy, 15 leagues from Lyon. His trial was still in progress in 1532.⁵⁴ Five more people had been arrested by 10 May. But they were not the right ones or else they had backup since, as we have seen, a new *placard* arrived.

It was then that the repression intensified: about thirty people were imprisoned and tried over three months through to August 1531. These were mostly commoners: in addition to a miller, a carpenter and a mattress maker, there were also breadwinners, maids, boatmen, beggars, etc. Women were arrested for their 'mauvaises paroles' (bad words – Farge 1992). There were many of them in the revolt itself, as noted in the consular accounts and Champier's stories, and several died in prison. They caused anxiety among the consuls who feared their ability to stir up and mobilise via their accusations of theft and stockpiling: on 10 May 1531, Pernette Barbière was accused of having 'semé parole par la ville qu'il fallait tuer tous ces gros larrons de la ville et que chacun le dit par la ville, compris le passage de la rivière' (Guigue and Guigue 1886, 421);⁵⁵ a servant was put in the pillory on the Saône bridge 'pour avoir dit que messieurs les conseillers avaient envoyé gens dans les champs pour garder de venir le blé en ville' (*ibid.*);⁵⁶ and a chambermaid was put on a ladder for having spoken ill of the councillors.⁵⁷ In the case of the rioters, these acts of repression can be understood as 'a systematic attempt by the authorities to sever the autonomous circuits of folk discourse and to deny this heterodox story any social site where it could be safely retold and interpreted' (Scott 1990, 126). Hanging or banishment were meted out to most of the rioters. This great brutality must be read as a response to critical discourse but also to the 'hidden transcripts' perceived by the dominant (which we can only assume to be insults, looks, postures, gestures, lack of deference, all rendered in the consular

⁵² AML, BB49, 210v (large numbers of people, both foreigners and others).

⁵³ Although he had asked the king for a pardon in November 1530 (AML, BB49, 228v).

⁵⁴ Guigue and Guigue 1886, 256, 293, 419.

⁵⁵ (spread the word through the town that all these big thieves in the town should be killed, and that everyone said so through the city, until the river crosses).

⁵⁶ (for having said that the councillors had sent people into the fields to prevent them from coming to the town with the wheat).

⁵⁷ Guigue and Guigue 1886, 418, 421.

registers as ‘murmuration’). It was a response that was commensurate with the fear felt not just in one precise moment but over many months or years of tension. It contrasted with the consulate’s much less severe repression of the *rebeyne* a century earlier in the context of consensus between the councillors and the people and to the detriment of the king’s men (Fédou 1958).

The severity on the part of the authorities was accompanied by a new treatment of poverty. From May 1531, faced with an influx of poor people from the countryside who came to join those from the town (under the influence of a priest, Jean de Vauzelles, whose brother was a very influential judge), the consulate took charge of the system that provided assistance: taking a census of all the poor, it set up an effective relief system at several points in the town. The system of *Aumône Générale* (General Alms) was perpetuated in 1534: the poor had to be domiciled in the city to be entitled to assistance, and therefore had to be registered. Forbidden to beg, they received their bread at a fixed time and place in exchange for a token; this assistance was accompanied by the obligation to work (Gutton 1971). Even though it was part of a European context of charity reform, it is difficult not to see this series of measures as a response to the fear aroused by the *rebeyne* and particularly by the signing of the poster of 1529. The poor man was no longer the seditious one, the political leader, the divine hand of justice. He became the assisted, the disciplined. This is how the municipal elites wanted it, as can be seen in the engraving in the booklet of the Institution of General Alms, where poor people can be seen waiting to receive alms, one after the other (Davis 1979b, 65).

Did the *placards* stop after 1531 and the agitation calm down? Certainly, there was no further mention of them in the registers for about ten years.⁵⁸ Then the *placards* started up once again: ‘seditious *placards*’ were posted in 1543 and the consular register betrayed an air of panic: the city prosecutor, sent to the king’s court, was admonished because he did not seem to grasp the measure of the threat, ‘placardz seditieux et scandaleux [ont été affichés] par ladite ville comme l’on luy a escript ... desquelz placartz l’on luy en a envoyé ung pour le monstrier par dela duquel l’on s’esbaist qu’il ne faict aucune responce’.⁵⁹ A new episode was attested to in mid-April 1545: was the month chosen on purpose?

Ont esté rapportez deux placartz trouvez sur le pont de saonne affigé au pillier de la justice et par ladite ville incitant la justice de donner ordre au fait du bled qui escherit journellement autrement y leur en prendra mal avec plusieurs parolles malsonnantes et comminatoires incitant à sédition et à mutination de peuple.⁶⁰

The pillar of justice on the Saône bridge: like the sign on the 1529 *placard*, the chosen venue refers to the demand for social justice.

Although the people of Lyon no longer mobilised – this probably dried up following the repression of the 1530s –, attempts to stir up the population by means of posters continued. The anonymous posting of *placards* throughout the city became the rioters’ favoured *modus*

⁵⁸ Nothing is mentioned, at least in the inventories (Rolle 1865) or by historians who have worked on the 1530s registers (Dureau 1998; Etienney 1999).

⁵⁹ AML, BB61, 22 November 1543, 159v-160 (Seditious and scandalous placards [were posted] by the said town as written to him ... of which placards one was sent to him to show it ... it is amazing that he made no reply). Case cited in Etienney 1999, 74.

⁶⁰ AML, BB63, 168 (Two placards found on the bridge of Saone posted at the pillar of justice and by the aforementioned city inciting the justice to give order to the fact of the wheat which bids daily otherwise it will take to them badly with several unwholesome and comminatory words inciting to sedition and mutiny of people). Case cited in Etienney 1999, 74.

operandi. However, it was quickly obscured in local histories. This process of concealment shows the extent to which the memory of insurrections and their obscuring play a part in the formation of social and political identities (Merle, Jettot, Herrero Sánchez 2018).

5. *The Forgotten Placard*

From the end of the riot, the narrative of the consular registers, as we have seen, gives the *placard* a high profile. But these registers were not intended to go beyond the narrow circle of the consulate. The history printed the same year as the riot by the doctor and historian Symphorien Champier, and reprinted the following year – this time for the purchasing public – clearly mentions the ‘tilletz qu’ilz avoient miz & affichez par les places et carfourcz la ou il y avoit escript que le dimanche iour saint marc se trouveroient quatre cens en la place des cordeliers pour bouter ordre aux blez’ (Champier 1884, 40),⁶¹ adding that the consuls should have anticipated the revolt better since it was announced and should have had the two main squares of the town, the Cordeliers and the Jacobins, guarded (*ibid.*). Shocked by the event, Champier engages throughout his account in a very violent diatribe against the lower classes and foreigners, who were guilty of drinking, reduced to primitive instincts, accused of having joined the Vaudois sect⁶² and, above all, accused of having robbed him, whereas he says he had always worked in favour of the people.

About fifty years after these accounts were written by the targets of the riot, a chronological history of the city of Lyon appeared. Coming to the reign of François I, the author, Guillaume Paradin, a cleric, tackles the question of the *rebeyne*. Taking up Champier’s account, he keeps the essential framework but omits the *placards*. Like Champier, he gives a place to the supposed drunkenness of the rioters: it was because of a tax on wine that the people had revolted:

le jour Saint-Marc coururent tous ces petits compagnons (en nombre de plus de 2000 et 200 femmes de telle farine, ou environ), en la place des grands cordeliers, tous armez de bastons, tels que la furie leur avoit mis entre les mains ...: & y estoit toute la lye du peuple, sans bride, sans chief. (Paradin 1573, 283)⁶³

The emphasis is on the lower world as the eternal troublemaker: the ‘étrangers’ (foreigners), ‘les crocheteurs, gaigne-deniers, petits métiers qui n’ont rien à gagner et encore moins à perdre’ (*ibid.*),⁶⁴ in short this ‘inifinie lie, & escume de populasse, qui n’est autre chose qu’inconstance, ligiereté & tumulte’ (*ibid.*, 285).⁶⁵ The account of the revolt takes up three pages. It is followed by 18 pages devoted to the setting up of the charitable institution of the General Alms.

The historian who succeeded Paradin in describing Lyon’s history is Claude de Rubys, a lawyer and a former League member and alderman. While he had ample opportunity to consult and compile the consular registers, he does not say a word about the *placards* either. Stressing the political dissensions of the years 1515-1521 (the party of the craftsmen), he then passes

⁶¹ (billets they had put up & posted in the squares and crossroads where it was written that on Sunday, Saint Mark’s Day, there would be four hundred people in the place of the Cordeliers to put the wheat in order).

⁶² Because of iconoclastic acts committed in front of his house (*ibid.*, 54). Henri Hauser is the only historian to insist on a religious reason for the revolt. It is indeed possible that the turbulent context of the early Reformation and the resurgence of old dissident currents such as the Vaudois, also called the ‘Pauvres de Lyon’, played a role (1896, 266).

⁶³ (on Saint Mark’s day, all these little companions (more than 2,000 in number and 200 women of the same species, or thereabouts) ran to the place of the great cordeliers, all armed with canes, such as the fury had put in their hands ...: & there were all the dregs of the people, without bridle, without leader).

⁶⁴ (the carriers, the breadwinners, the small trades who have nothing to gain and even less to lose).

⁶⁵ (infinite dregs, & scum of the rabble, which is nothing but inconstancy, levity & tumult).

quickly on the *rebeyne*, ‘ceste furieuse esmotion de la populace de Lyon’ (Rubys 1604, 365).⁶⁶ Pillage is described; the cause is the ‘pretext’ of rising wheat prices. The need to get drunk is also a recurrent motif. The cries of the rioters nevertheless summarised the words of the *placards*, without quoting them: ‘criants tout haut que les riches avoyent arrisquees les bleds & les laissoyent pourrir en leurs greniers, plustost que de les vendre & distribuer aux pauvres gens à prix raisonnable’ (*ibid.*).⁶⁷ The *Histoire littéraire* by the Jesuit Dominique de Colonia in 1728 does not add much to the now established account of events. The *Histoire de la ville de Lyon* written by the doctor and scholar Jean-Baptiste Monfalcon in 1846-1847 does not introduce anything novel either, except from accentuating the oral nature of the exchanges as a triggering factor: ‘Plusieurs attroupements se formèrent dans les rues et sur les places publiques; des gens, qui se disaient bien informés, parlaient d’accaparements du blé par les riches, pour affamer le peuple’ (Monfalcon 1847, 8).⁶⁸

It was not until the archivist Marie-Claude Guigue’s publication of the consular archives concerning the *rebeyne*, in 1886, that the *placards* became topical again: in the now republican context of France, André Steyert published a *Nouvelle histoire de Lyon et de ses provinces* in a tone committed to the people: ‘le commun peuple de la ville avait été convoqué par des placards anonymes signés d’un rébus, le povre (le pauvre monde)’ (Steyert 1899, 54).⁶⁹ Historians by this point mention the *placard* and quote from it. Three centuries after its beginnings, the insurrection of 1529 had regained a place in public thought.

What happened in the three hundred years during which the poster was forgotten? The insurrection was summed up in a few lines: it was sudden, and originated among the poorest Lyonnais and foreigners, and it was violent, with a lot of looting (and very little wheat) by an intoxicated and gullible crowd. Lieutenant Du Peyrat, a true hero, dealt with the situation by making the crowd believe that there was wheat to be had on Ile Barbe, so as to keep it away from the town and in the meantime regain control. At the end of the nineteenth century these clichés were revisited. Even if the *placard* generally remains overlooked, the revolt is preceded by posters. The rioters are a composite crowd and Ile Barbe is targeted with good reason, as it was well known that it had a large reserve of grain.

To conclude, the events of 1529-1531, while part of a chain of writings that began at least fifteen years earlier, are nonetheless distinct from preceding protests in that they created a political practice that instituted public writing as the engine of the uprising. While the content of the *placards* that appeared for some fifteen years afterwards is not recorded, it is known that the act of posting occurred on several occasions and that the threat that the writings carried was recorded by the consuls. Beyond the written text itself, the very materialisation of the posters on the city walls was charged with subversion. A few well-placed signs, such as the cruciferous globe, could inspire it. Moreover, there must have been many reading relays, at a time when city dwellers were widely exposed to the written word – and even more so in Lyon, a printing centre.

The year 1529 also saw the establishment of a venue as a forum for critical discussion, that of the Place des Cordeliers convent, a gathering place designated by the rioters (what was

⁶⁶ (this furious emotion of the populace of Lyon).

⁶⁷ (shouting aloud that the rich had monopolised the wheat & left it to rot in their granaries, rather than selling it & distributing it to the poor at a reasonable price).

⁶⁸ (Several gatherings formed in the streets and public squares; people, who claimed to be well informed, spoke of the hoarding of wheat by the rich, to starve the people).

⁶⁹ (the common people of the city had been summoned by anonymous placards signed with a rebus, le povre [the poor world]).

the involvement of the monks?), and then taken up again in 1530 (and probably afterwards) as a venue of display. This square was already commonly chosen as a meeting place for general assemblies of the population, both official and illegal; incidentally, Symphorien Champier reminds us that there were not enough squares in Lyon to hold a large number of people. But from 1529 onwards, without becoming the equal of the Venetian Ghetto or the Roman Pasquino, it had to take on another dimension. The Place des Cordeliers had the advantage of being at the heart of the popular district and an important place for gatherings of all kinds. Its use changed according to who conquered it: a venue for the call to insurrection in 1529, it became the seat of the Alms Office instituted by the consuls in 1534.

Did reconquest by the authorities also involve the use of the *placard* as a weapon? At the time, the circuits of official information were conveyed above all through the orality of the town crier. This was the system that prevailed for all: the underground *placard* itself took up the exergue of the official proclamations ('L'on fait à savoir'), as it could not afford to shout them out across the whole town. Proclamation in a loud voice that bounced from crossroads to crossroads was something the underground movement could not allow itself. For the authorities, publication was first and foremost oral, ahead of written publication, even if posters were well used by the consulate, and increasingly so (Fargeix 2007, 165). And the reconquest of the lost space was a reconquest by the cry: the long cry of the measures taken for bread on 20 April 1529 and then on 24 April; after the riot, the reading aloud on 28 April (in front of the assembled authorities and the notables 'en bon gros nombre'⁷⁰ – in good number); the reading of letters showing the actions taken by the councillors and the governor in the search for wheat; the crying out throughout the city on 6 May, to bring about the denunciation of the authors of the *placards*, and an identical system of crying out and reading in 1530-1531. It is not said that these proclamations were accompanied by *placards*. Power consisted in occupying the sound space. In contrast to the indiscriminately shared written word which produced a 'rupture of monopoly' (Castillo Gómez 2013, 310) and a 'rebalancing of propaganda forces' (Lecuppre-Desjardins 2010, 156), the 'cri public' (public cry) was the territory of power. Nevertheless, reflection on publicising the written word must have accelerated on the occasion of these public critiques of good government. It is interesting to note that one of the first surviving municipal *placards* for Lyon⁷¹ dates from the 1530s,⁷² and it is precisely a *placard* on the regulation of the price of bread. Like the caesuras and gaps in the consular registers,⁷³ this preservation may not be accidental. Omission and conservation are political practices. It is indeed an omission which, for three hundred years, deprived the insurgent people in 1529 of their strength of organisation and reflection. To forget the *placard* is to forget both the reasoning that led to the looting (which can then be described as 'emotion', as a raw and drunken force) and the skills of some of the rioters – and therefore their insertion into the dominant cultural codes. Although we are not certain of its author, the uprising placard was appropriated by the rioters and in the following

⁷⁰ AML, BB47, 241.

⁷¹ AML, 6Fi 00653.

⁷² According to Jeanne-Marie Dureau 1998. A recent study dates this bread price poster from a few years later (Cumby 2017).

⁷³ After the *placard* of 1529 and the account of the emotion (AML, BB46), another register is opened for the minutes (AML, BB48); the first pages are missing. However, this gap is filled by the ceremonial register (BB47). After the *placard* of 1531, the register (AML, BB49) is interrupted; another (AML, BB52) begins with the tidying up on the following day, 11 May 1531. René Fédou noted for his part ten years of interruption of the registers after the *rebeyne* of 1436 (1958).

years became a recurrent *modus operandi* designed to reactivate the still-vivid memory of the event. ‘L’espoir est une mémoire qui désire’ (Balzac 1842-1848, vol. 12, 110)⁷⁴.

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⁷⁴ (Hope is a memory that desires).

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People, Pamphlets and Popular Mobilisation in the Aragonese Rebellion of 1591*

Jesús Gascón Pérez
University of Zaragoza (<gasconj@unizar.es>)

Abstract

In 1591, Philip II faced a revolt from his Aragonese subjects. A good number of nobles, priests and citizens were involved in the rebellion, but artisans, farmers and other members of the people also played a role in it. The article focuses on this important conflict, emphasising the relevance of popular intervention and how it was mobilised by the pamphlets which the leaders of the movement commissioned and spread by diverse means in order to gain the support of the less privileged ranks of Aragonese society. In this sense, the Aragonese Rebellion of 1591 offers a good example of popular mobilisation and of the limits of popular agency within a political conflict during the Early Modern Age.

Keywords: 1591 Aragonese Rebellion, Hispanic Monarchy, Pamphlets, Political Conflicts, Popular Mobilisation

*Los libellos, los pasquines
las revueltas, los estruendos
el desorden, los motines,
insultos graves, y horrendos
paran en tremendos fines.
Blasco de Lanuza 1619*

1. Introduction: Subversive Writings and Popular Sedition During the Early Modern Age

The verses cited above were published by Canon Vicencio Blasco de Lanuza, who attributed them to ‘un Poeta de mi patria’¹ and explained that they formed part of a longer composition arguing ‘que ciertamente es el vulgo perniciosissimo si se descompone’.²

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¹ (a poet from my homeland). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

² (that certainly common people are most pernicious when in disarray).

Upon analysing the content of these verses, it is noteworthy that the author includes libels and pamphlets among the manifestations of violence that may generate serious disturbances. This notion aligns with the assessment by Francis Bacon, who argued that ‘Libels, and licentious Discourses against the State, when they are frequent and open; And in like sort, false Newes, often running up and downe, to the disadvantage of the State, and hastily embraced, are amongst the Signes of *Troubles*’. Bacon then refers to Virgil’s view that Fame was the sister of the Giants, which made rumours (*Fames*) ‘Reliques of Seditious past’ and, simultaneously, ‘the preludes of Seditious to come’. This is why he claims that the Latin author was correct in concluding that ‘*Seditious Tumults*, and *Seditious Fames*, differ no more, but as Brother and Sister, Masculine and Feminine’ (1625, 76-77). And, in a similar way, it is interesting to note that years later, in a 1664 trial of a bookseller accused of disseminating seditious pamphlets, the King’s serjeant Sir William Morton argued that ‘Dispersing seditious Books is very near a kin to raising of Tumults, they are as like as Brother and Sister: Raising of Tumults is the more Masculine, and Printing and Dispersing Seditious books, is the Feminine part of every Rebellion’ (Dzelzainis 2006, 139).

A little earlier, chroniclers recounting the conflicts in the kingdom of Aragon in the late sixteenth century highlighted the subversive influence of pasquinades circulated during various crises. This was particularly evident during the clerical riot in Teruel in 1571 and the Aragonese Rebellion which took place two decades later. Blasco de Lanuza and the Argensola brothers – contemporaries of his and, just like him, privileged witnesses to both events – shared a similar perspective on the issue.³ According to Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola, the unrestrained action of a royal official in Teruel in 1571 ‘tentó harto la paciencia a toda la provincia y, si no causó alborotos violentos, nacieron de su despecho pasquines y queexas’ (1996, 118).⁴ A similar view was expressed by Lupericio Leonardo de Argensola throughout his *Informacion* on the revolt against Philip II. In a first allusion, he stresses how widespread the diffusion of subversive writings had been during this episode and noted that ‘como estaba quitado el freno del temor, publicábanse sin autor muchos versos, que llaman *pasquines* ... que encendian los ánimos’ (1991, 94).⁵ A few pages later, he affirms that, when the order to raise men to resist the King’s army was received in Teruel, ‘Amanecieron en ciertos lugares públicos papeles culpando á los que estorbaban esta resolucion, y solevando al pueblo’ (121).⁶ Finally, he explains that one of the accused was ‘hombre de buen entendimiento y amigo de novedades, que no le hizo esto poco daño, porque le aplicó el fisco muchos de los pasquines que en aquellas sediciones alborotaron el pueblo’ (185-186).⁷

The documentation generated by the courts’ efforts to identify, prosecute and convict those who produced and disseminated subversive writings during the rebellion of 1591 has allowed

³ As will be seen in the following pages, the writings of Lupericio and Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola are particularly interesting. In addition to their status as eyewitnesses, they were renowned poets and active members of Spanish Court circles in the first decades of the seventeenth century. In fact, both served as secretaries to the Count of Lemos during his mandate as viceroy of Naples and were chroniclers of the kingdom of Aragon and chroniclers of the King in the Crown of Aragon. For an insight into the relevance of their ties to the Court, see Gascón Pérez 2012.

⁴ (strained the patience of the whole province and, although it did not cause violent unrest, it gave rise to pasquinades and complaints). A detailed analysis of this riot can be found in Miguel García 1996.

⁵ (since the bridle of fear had been removed, many verses without author were published, which they call pasquinades ... that inflamed the spirits).

⁶ (papers appeared in certain public places blaming those who hindered this resolution and arousing the people).

⁷ (a man of good understanding and fond of novelties, which did him no little harm, because the prosecutors attributed to him many of the pasquinades that stirred up the people during those seditions). Although Argensola does not mention his name, he is referring to Cosme Pariente, who was sentenced to the galleys, as observed by Pidal (1862-1863, vol. III, 137).

historians to gain insight into the content of a significant number of subversive compositions.⁸ Moreover, study of these legal records provides access to the testimonies collected by royal officials, which explain the production methods and means of circulation of these literary pieces. These testimonies also reveal the authorities' opinion about both the texts and their authors as elements conducive to public disturbances.⁹ The conclusions of the secular tribunals coincide in substance with that expressed in the accusations made against various clerics in 1571 and 1591 by two ecclesiastical courts for reading and publicly distributing 'romances y pasquines muy perjudiciales y escandalosos'¹⁰ (Royo García 1992, 254). In view of all this evidence, it seems plausible to conclude that in the early modern age there was a clear perception that the emergence of subversive literature during the build-up to a conflict contributed to its aggravation, since verbal violence, combined with acts of physical or symbolic violence, not only increased the effects caused by the latter, but also denoted the intention to involve the popular strata of society in the episode, which typically led to its further radicalisation (Burke 1978, 260-261; Zagorin 1982, 18-19).

2. *A General Overview of the Aragonese Rebellion of 1591*

The conflict which opposed King Philip II of Spain to his Aragonese subjects in the late sixteenth century provides a fine example of the impact of mobilisation campaigns founded on the dissemination of subversive writings. Therefore, the general features of this rebellion will be summarised here, starting by pointing out that this topic is not a new one for historiography: as I have indicated previously (Gascón Pérez 1995, 1999a, 2000), many erudite pages have been written by scholars, who often were captivated by the towering figure of Philip II and determined to emphasise the leading part played by the King's former secretary, Antonio Pérez, in the gestation and the outcome of the crisis. The accounts of the seventeenth-century chroniclers were influenced by the proximity of the events. Aragonese writers, for their part, wanted to defend the good name of their kingdom and sustain the continuity of its political regime, founded, as it was, on respect for the law over the King's will. In an effort to reconcile the two viewpoints, they blamed Pérez, a few rioters and the 'vulgo ciego' (ignorant [blind] common people), while exonerating the good citizens of Aragonese society. Such an argument allowed them to affirm the loyalty of their kingdom, minimise the extent of the uprising and vindicate their political system. At the same time, they were still able to justify the repression ordered by Philip II, to depict him as a fatherly ruler, not a tyrant, and to present all the legal restrictions which were passed in the session of the 'Cortes de Aragón' called in the town of Tarazona in 1592 as natural improvements to their laws.

The triad composed by Pérez, a small number of rioters and the ignorant masses is at the heart of the classic research into the conflict, which I have called the 'aristocratic view of 1591' (Gascón Pérez 2000). This was the thesis proposed by the Marquis of Pidal in his three-volume *Historia de las alteraciones de Aragón en el reinado de Felipe II* (1862-1863), and it was reinforced by the monograph *Antonio Pérez*, written by Gregorio Marañón (1947). According to both authors, the Aragonese political resistance against Philip II was led by a meagre cluster of mem-

⁸ As Antonio Castillo Gómez has pointed out, the intervention of the authorities to prosecute the authors of libels and pamphlets has meant that this type of writing has left a larger documentary footprint than other forms of what he calls 'exposed literature', which makes it more likely to be the subject of investigation by historians (2009, 594).

⁹ The documents related to this matter are kept in the Archivo General de Simancas, Estado, l. 35 and l. 36, and were essential for my book *La rebelión de las palabras* (Gascón Pérez 2003).

¹⁰ (very harmful and scandalous romances and pasquinades).

bers of the lesser nobility – knights and *infanzones* – closely associated with Antonio Pérez, and the conflict was limited to the city of Saragossa, the capital of the realm. Therefore, Marañón proposed rejecting the adjective ‘Aragonese’, instead referring exclusively to the revolt that took place in the city of Saragossa, an opinion that Jarque Martínez and Salas Auséns (1991) have recently endorsed. Despite differing in this respect from the general interpretation of the conflict elaborated by Pidal, the fact is that this account has been widely accepted to the present day, as shown, for example, by the praise that Hispanist Albert Lovett and Catalan historian Jordi Nadal (2001, 134) dedicated to Pidal, the former asserting that ‘But however good the modern authorities, they will never supersede the marqués de Pidal’ (Lovett 1986, 326). On the other hand, the most common word used to identify a historical episode that until 1862 had never received a specific denomination is still *alteraciones* (troubles). The success of the expression is illustrated by the fact that it was used in the Spanish translation of Geoffrey Parker’s latest biography of Philip II, even though an earlier version of the book had used the term rebellion.¹¹

However, the actual manuscript evidence that was deployed by Pidal and Marañón, as well as the latest research by Colás Latorre (1991 and 1996), Gil Pujol (1991a, 1995 and 1997), Gracia Rivas (1992), Sánchez López (1992 and 1996-1997) and Gascón Pérez (1994, 2000, 2003 and 2010) suggest several weaknesses in the ‘aristocratic view’. First, whereas Saragossa was the main scene of the events that took place – the town being the seat of all the judicial and political institutions that were involved in the conflict – Pidal himself observed that an early sign of opposition took place in the town of Calatayud, near the Castilian frontier, where the friars of the monastery of San Pedro Mártir sheltered Antonio Pérez and prevented royal officers from arresting him. In addition, several Aragonese municipalities supplied weapons and troops to the forces commanded by the ‘Justicia Mayor’ (the Chief Justice of Aragon) in his resistance to the King’s army. Moreover, this call to arms provoked riots in Teruel and Albarracín which were later investigated by a royal commissioner, whose activity concluded with the execution of approximately ten people. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the subsequent repression of the insurrection included several general measures to restore order: military occupation of the kingdom; convening of the ‘Cortes de Aragón’, where new laws were enacted; a general pardon – albeit with multiple exceptions – decreed by the king; and the signing of an Act of ‘unión y concordia’ in 1593, which declared a state of emergency throughout the realm so that all the fugitives might be pursued and punished without any regard for legal guarantees.

As for the term *alteraciones* coined by Pidal to describe the conflict, it must be said that this and other words were indiscriminately employed by contemporary writers. Only the word ‘rebeldión’ seems to have been avoided by the Aragonese chroniclers – though not by the Castilian ones – who used it solely to deny the accusation of rebelling against their King. The reality is that such a generic term as *alteraciones* cannot adequately describe a conflict in which the monarch’s legitimacy to exercise absolute power¹² was called into question; the choice of this word devalues the importance of the events. Thus, despite the claims of Aragonese chroniclers, we may speak of a rebellion, because Philip II condemned the rioters ‘por rebeldes, traydores e infieles a Nos y a nuestra Corona Real’,¹³ and they were sentenced for the crime of *lèse-majesté*. The word ‘rebellion’ accurately describes what occurred in Aragon in 1591, despite the actors’

¹¹ See Parker (2012, 888) and Parker (2015, 438). The term used in the original English version of the latter work is ‘revolt’ (Parker 2014, 333).

¹² In this article I have preferred to speak of the defence of absolute power rather than absolutism. In respect to this concept, the work of Gil Pujol (2020) offers an interesting review of its historiographical uses, debates and new approaches.

¹³ (as rebels, traitors and [people] disloyal to Us and our Royal Crown). Quoted in Gascón Pérez (2010, 389).

personal feelings. Additionally, the term avoids the dangerous ideological weight implied by the term 'revolution', frequently used by theorists of social conflict (Zagorin 1982, 16-17).

Finally, the 'aristocratic view' does not answer all the questions relating to the social, geographical and ideological analysis of the conflict. Evidence from the archives highlights the social complexity of an event that involved not only nobles, knights and *infanzones*, but also priests, citizens, craftsmen and 'labradores' (farmers).¹⁴ This was an uprising that drew in all social elements, whilst the King nonetheless still enjoyed the support of much of Aragonese society. Not only that, but the 'aristocratic view' does not explain the geographical extent of the rebellion. Finally, Pidal and Marañón knew next to nothing about the political thought of the major figures, or about how they were influenced by kinship ties and patronage networks. It is with the aim of presenting a new and more comprehensive approach to the uprising that I suggest that there was an 'Aragonese Rebellion of 1591', in which five phases can be distinguished. They were marked by the entrance and exit of the leading protagonists, by the evolution of their objectives and by the different means that they employed to achieve them.

First, the 'Legal Phase' extends from Antonio Pérez's arrival in Aragon in April 1590 until the uprising of 24 May 1591 and is characterised by the participation of members of all the estates, who upheld Pérez's right to engage in legal proceedings against the King before the Court of the 'Justicia Mayor' and the Aragonese 'Real Audiencia' (Royal Supreme Court). Pérez, who had fled his Castilian prison, reached Aragon to seek the protection of some noblemen with whom he had become friends during his career as principal secretary to the King, but he was also hoping to benefit from a legal system whose judicial guarantees were more amenable than those of Castile, as well as the public sympathy of a society which had experienced political conflicts with the Habsburg monarchs for decades, and a kingdom which shared a border with France. As a result, he was able to present his case as the case of the kingdom of Aragon, and attract the attention – and support – of most of the high nobility,¹⁵ of a good number of knights and *infanzones*,¹⁶ priests,¹⁷ citizens,¹⁸ lawyers,¹⁹ notaries,²⁰ physicians,²¹ merchants,²² printers,²³ cantors,²⁴ craftsmen²⁵ and farmers.²⁶ When Philip II realised he would never have his former secretary condemned by the Aragonese courts of justice, he resorted to the Inquisition, the sole institution whose power could prevail over the guarantees granted by the Aragonese laws. Pérez

¹⁴ The Spanish term 'labrador' may refer both to a farmer (who owns the land he works) and a peasant (a labourer who works the land of others). Those who took part in the events of 1591 were mainly prosperous townsmen who owned small- to medium-sized country estates. Here the English word 'farmer' is preferred since it describes more accurately their socioeconomic position.

¹⁵ For example, the Duke of Villahermosa, the Counts of Aranda, Morata and Belchite and the Baron of La Laguna.

¹⁶ Don Martín de Bolea, Don Pedro de Bolea, Don Martín de Lanuza, Don Juan de Aragón, Don Diego de Heredia, Don Juan de Luna, Don Miguel de Gurrea and Francisco de Ayerbe, among others.

¹⁷ Such as Don Vicencio Agustín, Prior of La Seo, Bartolomé Llorente, Prior of El Pilar, Luis Sánchez de Cutanda, Dean of Teruel, Gregorio de Andía, Vicar of Saint-Paul, the Franciscan friar Diego Murillo, and others.

¹⁸ Don Juan Agustín, Juan de Laserna, Don Galacián Cerdán and Esteban de Ardanza, among others.

¹⁹ For example, Gaspar de Espinosa, Gerardo de Clavería, Juan de Bardaxí and Andrés Serveto de Aniñón.

²⁰ Like Juan de Mendive, Bartolomé Malo and the brothers Miguel and Mateo de Villanueva.

²¹ Such as Juan de Murillo and Bartolomé Foncalda.

²² These included Jaime de Urgel, Francisco Pérez de Calatayud, Miguel López de Tolosa and Juan de Sádaba.

²³ Juan de Alteraque and Luis Ganareo.

²⁴ Jerónimo Muniesa and Martín Ruiz.

²⁵ For example, the wool manufacturer Pedro de Fuertes and members of other guilds, such as the hosiers Martín de la Era and Pedro de Quintana, the sack manufacturer Juan Royo and the dyer Martín Sarrial.

²⁶ Juan del Barco, Jaime Lacambra and Jaime Cristóbal, among others.

was therefore accused of heresy. The Court of the 'Justicia Mayor' complied with this decision, and Pérez was handed over to the Holy Office. But a riot against the Inquisition broke out and the rioters returned the prisoner to the jurisdiction of the 'Justicia Mayor'.

In the 'Coercive Phase', between the riots which took place on 24 May and 24 September 1591, tensions increased. Pérez and his protectors, on the one hand, and the King and his officers, on the other, called on the judges to respect the law, but put pressure on the lawyers by various means. Meanwhile, some of the nobles – whether titled or not – feared the social unrest and the foreseeable reaction of Philip II and decided to abandon their initial attitude and to transfer Pérez to the Holy Office in order to appease the monarch. A new attempt to transfer the prisoner, on 24 September, ended in a second riot, which was much more violent than the first one and resulted in the death of about fifteen people. Pérez was released. Throughout this period, more members of the lower orders of Aragonese society became involved in the rebellion. Under such circumstances, the insurrection became more and more radical. In addition, it should be noted that the second riot was directed not only against the Inquisition, but also against those – even the Aragonese – who had supported the attempt to transfer Pérez to the Holy Office's prison.

During the 'Radical Phase', from 24 September to 31 October 1591, Pérez remained in Saragossa, out of Philip II's reach, while the King decided to send an army to occupy Aragon and restore order in the realm. This decision provoked different reactions among the Aragonese. Some of them contacted the commander of the King's army, the 'capitán general' Don Alonso de Vargas, to ask for his help and place themselves at his disposal, or to consult him about the nature of his mission. Others wrote to the royal Court, to ask for some more lenient recourse than armed intervention. A third group, composed mainly of nobles and royal officers, tried to leave Saragossa or, at least, take their families to safety. This caused an exodus which was only interrupted when the craftsmen's guilds took control of the city's gates, an unmistakable sign of the authorities' loss of power. Meanwhile, a few daring men plotted to kill some of the leaders of the uprising. Finally, a group of noblemen, knights, *infanzones*, citizens and Prior Don Vicencio Agustín formally asked the 'Diputación' (the standing committee of the estates) to find out whether Vargas' objective on entering the kingdom would be to usurp the right to administer justice. In that case they would call the people to resist his troops. The 'Diputación' corroborated their suspicions and, after consulting a board of thirteen lawyers, on 31 October 1591 pronounced a statement of resistance, which was confirmed the following day by the Court of the 'Justicia Mayor'. The involvement of the 'Diputación' and the 'Justicia' gave institutional support to an uprising led by members of the lower nobility, craftsmen, citizens and farmers. The Duke of Villahermosa and the Count of Aranda, the main representatives of the higher nobility, had an ambiguous stance that failed to hide the fact that they were closer to the position of the Aragonese rebels than to the defence of the King's absolute power.

The fourth phase is the shortest and least known part of the conflict. The 'Military Phase' lasted for only the first twelve days of November 1591, when the 'Diputación' and the 'Justicia' tried to recruit an army to resist the royal troops. They enlisted men from the parishes of Saragossa and demanded that other municipalities and nobles send soldiers to the capital city of the kingdom. The response to this demand was patchy (Gil Pujol 1991a) and led to turmoil in some places, which was particularly serious in Teruel (Almagro Basch 1984). In short, it is difficult to determine the size of the force gathered in this way, though sources confirm that the Aragonese army was not a large one. Moreover, it consisted primarily of non-professional soldiers, although there were some who had previously seen service in the King's armies. Artillery was provided by several municipalities and noblemen, and supplies were transported to Saragossa, while Aragonese officers confiscated the goods that had been acquired by the King's

‘capitán general’ Vargas. Army officers, captains and subalterns were chosen, and even a Council of War was created, composed of the Duke of Villahermosa, the Count of Aranda, Don Miguel de Gurrea and Don Pedro de Híjar. Lord Chief Justice Don Juan de Lanuza and Deputy Don Juan de Luna, who led the troops, took part in it as well. Although the rebel army was deployed in the field, it never engaged in a battle. When Lanuza and Luna realised that the royal army was approaching Saragossa, they fled, and the news of their escape provoked a stampede. Vargas encountered no opposition when he entered Saragossa on 12 November 1591.

Aragon remained under military occupation until September 1593, and Saragossa hosted a military garrison until 1626. Philip II decreed a ruthless repression, which started with the execution of Don Juan de Lanuza on 20 December 1591, followed by the death of fifteen more people in January 1592, by order of Governor Don Ramón Cerdán. Meanwhile, Antonio Pérez and some of his Aragonese supporters reached France to seek the protection of Catherine of Bourbon, sister of Henry IV of France. With her collaboration, they prepared a military expedition across the Pyrenees which might be considered the fifth and last phase of the conflict, or even its epilogue. The ‘Jornada de los Bearnese’ (Bearnese Expedition) took place in February 1592. Its aim was to take advantage of the discontent caused by the repression instigated by the King, especially the death of the Lord Chief Justice, the most significant magistrate of the kingdom, and to incite the Aragonese to revolt against occupation. The attempt failed. Some of the organisers of the ‘Jornada’ were captured, and others fled to France. The repression continued for years – several executions in Saragossa and Teruel in 1592, some *autos de fe* by the Holy Office between 1592 and 1597, numerous confiscations and other major or minor punishments that lasted until the beginning of the seventeenth century. Not only that, but Philip II introduced significant changes into the Aragonese political regime, mostly limiting the powers and functions of those institutions involved in the conflict, namely the ‘Diputación’ and the ‘Justicia’. The call for a session of the ‘Cortes de Aragón’ in May 1592 permitted the continuity of the constitutional regime, while allowing the King to hold a strong sway over it (Gil Pujol 1991b, 111-115).

The effects of the repression were visible until 1599, when Philip III, recently married in Valencia and on his way to Madrid, passed through Teruel and Saragossa and ordered the removal of the remains of those executed, still displayed in various public places in both cities. Many years later, the Castilian chronicler Luis Cabrera de Córdoba (1877, 612) recorded how Antonio Pérez had died in France in 1611 and that, four years after his death, his descendants had obtained a pardon for him from the Holy Office. In line with this decision, Cabrera de Córdoba wrote, the Saragossa rioters should by rights have been declared innocent of sheltering him when he had sought the protection of the Aragonese laws against the Inquisition. They were not pardoned, of course, but historians might well reflect on how the insurgents had just as much reason to consider themselves guilty of no more than the defence of their laws, as the King had to consider them as rebels. In any case, as stated above, the term ‘Aragonese Rebellion’ seems to describe accurately the event in which they played a leading part, in keeping with the complex nature of the uprising here described.

3. *The People and the Limits of Their Political Commitment*

When examining popular participation in the Aragonese Rebellion, it is important to remember that several contemporary authors specifically attributed acts of resistance against authority to individuals of lower social status. This was often done with the intention of absolving the Aragonese ruling groups and the institutions of the realm of their responsibility for the conflict

(Gascón Pérez 1994). For instance, Don Francisco de Gurrea y Aragón claimed that ‘esta guerra y conquista que á su naturaleza y patria hacían y ofensa á su Rey, no la hacían sino con unos gitones y una gente perdida del pueblo, que sólo la encendían y comandaban Gil de Mesa y Don Diego de Heredia y Don Martín de Lanuza’ (1888, 120).²⁷ We find a similar idea in Gonzalo de Céspedes y Meneses when he writes that ‘Çapateros de viejo, Cortadores de carne, Xíferos y Açacanes, y otras tales personas; fueron sus confidentes: mas no la gente noble, no los cuerdos, y Jurisconsultos prudentes; ni como escrivio alguno, hasta los Religiosos’ (1622, 124).²⁸ Something similar can be said of Lupercio de Argensola’s treatment of the popular participation in the riots that broke out in Saragossa in May and September 1591. Referring specifically to the shouts of ‘viva la libertad’²⁹ which, all authors agree, abounded on both occasions, Argensola attributes them to the ‘turba insolente’ (1991, 105)³⁰ and the ‘vulgo alborotado y ciego’ (90),³¹ and especially to ‘muchos gascones enjertos en el reino, dando la lengua testimonio de su patria, que no sabian pronunciar las voces que daban á vueltas de la mas gente, ni decir viva la libertad, que era voz que el vulgo este dia y otros repetia muchas veces’ (*ibid.*).³²

In short, the examples given here show that these authors insisted on presenting a few rioters and marginal social groups as responsible for the disorders. It was an idea which allowed them to relativise the extent of what had happened and which, as mentioned above, was later adopted by the proponents of the ‘aristocratic view’ of the conflict. Thus, Cabrera de Córdoba went so far as to assert that ‘el reino siempre estuvo sosegado. La ciudad jamas concurrió en violencia alguna. Concurrieron aquellos pocos inquietos con alguna parte del vulgo, y en todo ello fue harto mayor el ruido que las nueces’ (1877, 585, note 1).³³ For his part, Lupercio Leonardo de Argensola concluded that, given the small number of people involved, ‘No por la culpa de tan pequeño numero de delinquentes se ha de poner nota de infamia a todo un Reyno’ (1991, 131).³⁴

However, while it is undeniable that the chroniclers invoked the popular component of the Aragonese conflict in order to exonerate the upper strata of the kingdom, it is no less true that those involved in the uprising included not only nobles, knights, *infanzones* and priests, but also, as mentioned in the previous section, a wide range of people from a variety of backgrounds. Here we might define the elusive category of ‘people’ as consisting of citizens, jurists, merchants and other professionals, as well as craftsmen and farmers. In fact, many of them were prosecuted and sentenced both for their participation in acts of violence and for expressing their refusal to obey the orders of the King or his officials. Various documents allude to their attitudes as well. Some of the chroniclers mentioned above also highlight the political awareness

²⁷ (this war and conquest which they made against their nature and homeland, and offence [which they committed] against their King, was aided and abetted by no more than a few foreign vagabonds and lost souls from amongst the common people of the town, who were encouraged and commanded by Gil de Mesa and Don Diego de Heredia and Don Martín de Lanuza alone).

²⁸ (cobblers, meat cutters, slaughterers and water carriers, and other such persons were their confidants: but not the noble people, not the level-headed, and not the prudent jurisconsults; nor even, as one wrote, the religious).

²⁹ (long live liberty).

³⁰ (insolent mob).

³¹ (unruly and blind common people).

³² (many Gascons settled in the kingdom, whose tongue bore testimony of their origins, because they knew not how to pronounce the slogans that they uttered in response to the rest of the people, nor to say ‘long live liberty’, which was the slogan that the common people repeated many times over on that day and on other days). About verbal and gestural violence during the Aragonese Rebellion, see the work by Bravo 2019.

³³ (the kingdom was always quiet. The city was never involved in any violence. Those restless few were involved with some of the common people, and in all this there was far too much ado about nothing).

³⁴ (Not for the fault of such a small number of criminals should a whole kingdom be tainted with infamy).

of certain groups from the lower estates – especially farmers and artisans –, whom they praise for their commitment to the defence of the ‘fueros’.³⁵

Thus, Lupericio Leonardo de Argensola, in his allusions to the ‘vulgo ciego’ (ignorant common people), affirms that ‘el mayor cuerpo de él era de labradores y pelaires, que hay gran número desta gente en esta ciudad y no son como en otras de España rústicos, sino muy pláticos, valientes y atrevidos, y sobre todo muy celosos de las leyes’ (1991, 90).³⁶ More generally, Father Murillo noted that, during the conflict, ‘el hypo del pueblo era no permitir que se les quebrantassen los fueros’ (1616, Part 2, 85).³⁷ Furthermore, through various testimonies we know that, during the rebellion, a good number of farmers, artisans and other people of popular status attended meetings, together with nobles, knights, ecclesiastics and members of the local citizenry, at which they discussed the events of the moment and insisted on the need to defend the privileges and liberties of the kingdom (Gascón Pérez 2010, 540-545). Argensola recorded one of these meetings, in which ‘algunos labradores a quien el virrey habló le osaron responder descomedidamente, y tal dellos hubo que dicen que le dijo que daría sarmientos para quemar a quien hiciese contra los fueros y libertades’ (1991, 99).³⁸ In relation to this episode, statements by the viceroy Don Jaime Ximeno have been preserved, in which he declares that ‘Viose tambien mucho bullicio y desatino en los labradores y gente popular’ (Gascón Pérez 2010, 168), and that he regrets the complicity between the farmers and the promoters of the uprising, because, as he puts it, ‘aunque algunos dan en la cuenta, vense en muchos labradores estan muy persuadidos y que hablan el mismo lenguaje’ (167).³⁹ For his part, the Count of Aranda noted a similar attitude in some of the farmers he knew, who ‘blasonaban mucho de çelar la observancia de los fueros’ (475).⁴⁰ This political commitment was also acknowledged in a pamphlet describing the riot on 24 May 1591, which claims that ‘más que la tierra, cultivan / la libertad de su patria’ (Gascón Pérez 2003, 33, ll. 35-36)⁴¹ and praises their role in the episode:

Cántese de labradores
lo que de nobles se canta:
que sus ocasiones obran,
obran mucho y mucho callan.
Intitúlense defensas
de los muros de su patria;
de sus émulos, verdugos;
y de su ciudad, murallas.
Dese a quien se debe el premio
de gloria tiranizada
a caballeros impuesta:

³⁵ The term ‘fueros’ refers to the historical laws of the kingdom of Aragon. At the time, ‘fueros’, ‘privilegios’ and ‘leyes’ were often used indistinctly.

³⁶ (the largest part of them were farmers and wool manufacturers, since there are a large number of these people in this city, and they are not the rustic yokels that are found in other cities in Spain, but very practical, brave and daring, and above all very zealous of the laws).

³⁷ (the people’s mantra was not to allow their ‘fueros’ to be violated).

³⁸ (some of the farmers to whom the viceroy spoke dared to answer him discourteously, and it is said that one among them told him that he would provide firewood [vine shoots] to burn whoever did anything against the ‘fueros’ and liberties).

³⁹ (there was also a lot of unrest and foolishness among farmers and the populace) and (although some of them understand it, it is clear that many farmers are very persuaded and speak the same language).

⁴⁰ (took great pride in their zeal for the observance of the ‘fueros’).

⁴¹ (more than the land, they cultivate / the freedom of their homeland).

dese a su dueño por paga.
 Atribúyanse las loas
 y las sátiras que andan
 a solos los labradores,
 pues son hijas las hazañas.⁴²
 (34-35, ll. 61-76)

Obviously, the praise of farmers and artisans is part of a more complex discourse, aimed at mobilising these and other popular groups. In this sense, it is possible to speak of a set of political notions common to the rebels in 1591, whose analysis might be based on various sources, including the pamphlets that circulated at different times of the conflict (Gascón Pérez 2018). However, this does not of course entail the existence of an ideology that was unanimously shared by all the inhabitants of the kingdom of Aragon. In fact, as Christian Jouhaud pointed out in the case of the French *mazarinades*,⁴³ it is not even possible to be sure if the authors of the political satires really professed all the ideas expressed in their writings (1985, 16). After all, the primary purpose of these works was a rhetorical one, which was simply to move their audience to action. Or, in the words of the Count of Aranda, ‘levantar el pueblo e los motines que sucedieron’ (Gascón Pérez 2003, xciv).⁴⁴ In this respect, it should not be forgotten that the instrumental nature of this ‘revolutionary publicity’ is shaped by the direct intervention of Antonio Pérez, who used it to secure the support of a significant sector of the Aragonese population in his eventually successful attempt to evade Philip II’s justice. His own contemporaries were aware of this strategy, as seen in Lupercio Leonardo de Argensola, who referred to it in the following terms:

como estaba quitado el freno del temor, publicábanse sin autor muchos versos, que llaman *pasquines*, ... señaladamente un diálogo, que, aunque en verso suelto, imitaba mucho el estilo de Luciano: dicese que le compuso el mismo Antonio Perez; en que introducía las almas del marques de Almenara y de don Juan de Gurrea, gobernador de Aragon, hablando en el infierno, y á vueltas incitando á los aragoneses á la defensa de sus leyes ó fueros. (1991, 94)⁴⁵

Argensola also claims that, to a large extent, the success of the literary campaign was based on its ability to arouse sympathy for Pérez’s fate, especially among the common people (51). And, in turn, Gonzalo de Céspedes y Meneses emphasised that the former secretary knew how to play up ‘diestramente, la obseruancia inuiolable, de sus leyes y fueros. Para con tal pretesto, confundir sus delictos, diuertir el castigo, y hazer (mediante su vigor, y las diligencias de los sediciosos amigos) comun y publico, el daño particular y propio’ (1622, 117).⁴⁶ Researchers

⁴² (May it be sung about farmers / what is sung about the nobles: / that their facts work, / they work much and keep much silent. / Let us give them the title of defenders / of the walls of their homeland; / executioners of their emulators / and bulwarks of their city. / May the prize of tyrannised glory, / given to knights, / be given to whom it is due: / May it be given in payment to its owner. / Let us attribute the praise / and the satires that circulate / to the farmers alone, / for these deeds are [their] daughters).

⁴³ Popular songs and pamphlets against Cardinal Mazarin.

⁴⁴ (to raise the people and the riots that followed).

⁴⁵ (since the bridle of fear had been removed, many verses were published anonymously, which they call *pasquinades* ... notably [one of them was] a dialogue, which, although in loose verse, very much imitated the style of Lucian: it is said that Antonio Pérez himself composed it; in it he presented the souls of the Marquis of Almenara and Don Juan de Gurrea, Governor of Aragon, speaking in hell, and in turn inciting the Aragonese to defend their laws or ‘fueros’).

⁴⁶ (skillfully, the inviolable observance of the laws and ‘fueros’. In order to obfuscate, with such a pretence, his offences, to divert punishment, and turn – by his own vigour, and the diligence of his seditious friends – a private and personal injury into a common and public one).

are in unanimous agreement on this matter, starting with Pidal, who, in spite of everything, made little use of the pamphlets in his study (1862-1863, vol. II, 41-42), and the same may be said of Marañón (1948, vol. II, 554-555). For his part, Teófanés Egido analysed in detail the content of several poems and pointed out that Pérez ‘had the skill – and the good fortune – to combine his personal cause with a much broader one: the problem of the Aragonese ‘Fueros’ and Liberties, the Inquisition’s jurisdiction and the fact that the Kingdom was ruled by foreign (i.e. Castilian) viceroys, besides secular social tensions’ (1973, 18-19). In any case, as the same author explains, ‘The monarchical institution ... remains almost entirely unscathed, as the invectives are directed at figures who played a role in the trial against Antonio Pérez; more specifically, they are aimed at his personal enemies’. Recently, Paloma Bravo has insisted on the importance of Pérez as a promoter of the pasquinades, highlighting the intellectual and political vitality of the city of Saragossa, ‘capable of producing in a few months a large number of libels that are often surprising for their quality’ (1998, 42).

4. *The Political Content of the Aragonese Pasquinades*

As I have had occasion to ascertain previously (Gascón Pérez 2003, 2018 and 2020), the study of the content of these writings clearly shows that the references to Pérez’s unjust persecution coexisted with abundant calls for the defence of the Aragonese ‘fueros’, which were praised as ‘los fueros, leyes pías / tan dignas de conservarse’ (Gascón Pérez 2003, 122, ll. 107-108),⁴⁷ or as ‘los santos fueros’ (142, l. 2)⁴⁸ and ‘las santas libertades’ (41, l. 3)⁴⁹. In fact, these invocations became, over time, the most recurrent leitmotif in the pasquinades, which proclaim that ‘¡Vivan, vivan nuestros fueros / y mueran nuestros contrarios!’ (42, ll. 51-52),⁵⁰ and often also include references to the ‘patria’ (homeland) or the ‘nación aragonesa’ (Aragonese nation) and the need to defend it, above all, from the trickery of traitors, as exemplified below:

Quando las leyes tuercen y aquellos a quien nuestra patria tiene por padres suelen ser malos padrastrós y prevaricadores dellas, es tiempo de resoluciones temerarias, no dando lugar a que la malicia, con fines interesados, sea el precio de nuestras sagradas leyes. (133)⁵¹

For the most part, these formulas were accompanied by reiterated expressions of loyalty to Philip II, who only exceptionally was the object of direct attacks, although it is worth noting that these included several accusations of tyranny and an unfavourable comparison with Herod, since, as we find in one of the poems, the King of Judea saw his crown threatened by the omen that the King of the Jews had been born who was to dethrone him. But as for the Spanish King, ‘A este nadie le quita / su cetro ni su corona, / y este a nadie perdona / si no es al que al mal le incita’ (144, ll. 21-24).⁵² By contrast, various royal ministers and Aragonese authorities, as well as members of the Holy Office, became the target of numerous attacks; they were accused of seeking to undermine

⁴⁷ (the ‘fueros’, pious laws / so worthy of preservation).

⁴⁸ (holy ‘fueros’).

⁴⁹ (holy liberties).

⁵⁰ (Long live, long live our ‘fueros’ / and death to our adversaries!).

⁵¹ (When the laws are twisted and those whom our homeland considers to be its fathers are often bad stepfathers and prevaricators of the law, it is time for fearless resolutions, not allowing malice, for self-interested ends, to be the price of our sacred laws).

⁵² (From this one nobody takes away / his sceptre or his crown / and this one forgives nobody / except the one who incites him to evil).

the 'fueros', often due to their hostility towards Pérez in the legal cases against him. This explains why numerous pasquinades surfaced during the 'Coercive Phase' of the conflict. The instigators of the riot on 24 May had an interest in recording their success, ridiculing their opponents and justifying their actions, which gave rise to abundant satirical texts, the best of which was the 'Pasquín del Infierno' (Pasquinade of Hell) mentioned above.⁵³ These writings also attempted to influence the verdict of the Court of the 'Judicantes', an institution which consisted of seventeen legal laymen, who were advised by two jurists. On 10 July it was to rule on the complaints against two lieutenants of the 'Justicia Mayor' filed by Antonio Pérez and Don Martín de Lanuza, for having unjustly refused their appeals based on the 'fueros'. As a consequence, various poems depicted the two lieutenants as prevaricators, and denounced their attempts to bribe several members of the court. Amidst tremendous tension, both defendants were sentenced to debarment from public office for life and three years' banishment from Aragon. The sentence was later revoked by Philip II during the repression that followed the conflict (Gascón Pérez 2003, lxxv-lxxvi).

Later, during the 'Military Phase', a popular riot was provoked by the posting of pamphlets in the city of Teruel. They had appeared in response to the local authorities' reluctance to send troops to Saragossa at the request of the 'Justicia Mayor' to resist the army of Philip II. Consequently, as Lupericio Leonardo de Argensola puts it, 'Amanecieron en ciertos lugares públicos papeles culpando á los que estorbaban esta resolucion, y solevando al pueblo; y aunque mucha gente vulgar, que estaba en la plaza, los leia, ninguno los quitaba, hasta que llegaron unos alguaciles' (1991, 121).⁵⁴ When the bailiffs tore up the pasquinades, 'dicen que uno de los del pueblo dixo, que antes debieran estar escritos con letras de oro' (*ibid.*),⁵⁵ and it was this remark that incited the population to revolt. The killing of several citizens, accused of being traitors to the 'fueros', compelled Philip II to dispatch a commissioner to Teruel to judge what had happened, which led to several death sentences and condemnation of others to the galleys. Finally, it is worth mentioning the late appearance of a pasquinade when the repression of the uprising was already under way. Specifically, on 22 July 1592, three copies of a text containing intensely derogatory comments against the King, including the aforementioned comparison with Herod, were circulated (Gascón Pérez 2003, 143-153). When the Holy Office saw them a few days later, the inquisitors lamented that 'sera malo de averiguar el author, por ser muchos los de aquella opinion, y aumenta esta sospecha el ver que los mas edictos que avemos fixado en las yglesias contra los absentes los an rasgado al parescer de propio' (quoted in Gascón Pérez 2003, lxxiii-lxxiv).⁵⁶ As they foresaw, their diligences did not bear fruit. However, it does not seem that those verses had any better luck, since, as Pilar Sánchez López notes, 'The pasquinade had little or no popular resonance given the few copies that were found and the speed with which they were withdrawn. It had a greater effect on the minds of the inquisitors, who were surprised that at this point, when the kingdom had 'the knife at its throat and punishment in its hand', any sign of opposition should have been made public' (1996-1997, 331).

⁵³ Undoubtedly it is the composition which has attracted most interest among researchers. That is the reason why it has been published on many occasions. It may be found, for instance, in Gascón Pérez 2003, 60-75.

⁵⁴ (Papers appeared in certain public places blaming those who hindered this resolution and arousing the people; and although many vulgar people, who were in the square, were reading them, none of them took them down, until some bailiffs arrived).

⁵⁵ (they say that one of the commoners said that they should rather have been written in letters of gold).

⁵⁶ (the author will be hard to find, as there are many of that opinion, and this suspicion is heightened by the fact that most of the edicts that we have posted up in the churches against absentees have been torn down on purpose, apparently).

5. *Political Pamphlets as a Weapon for Popular Mobilization*

At this point, it should be recalled that philologists, linguists, anthropologists and historians have stressed the peculiar nature of this type of literary composition, which, as a genre, falls between elite and popular culture, as well as between written and oral communication. With regard to the first pair of concepts, it is worth explaining that in recent decades it has become quite common to qualify the tendency to refer to popular literature by using expressions such as ‘semi-popular’ (García de Enterría 1973, 42) or ‘popularised’ (Caro Baroja 1990, 521). After all, as Teófanés Egido reminds us, the authors of pasquinades whose identity has been established ‘belong to sectors far removed from the lower classes, on account of their interests and mindset’ (1973, 11). This, in the words of Egido, means that ‘the people, the common people, are the target – not the agent – of all this immense production, which does not appear to be the expression of popular public opinion, but that of a minority who are interested in influencing the masses’ (1971, 47). But this does not invalidate the fact that, despite the educated background of the authors of pasquinades and of political satires in general, they were still able to combine resources from elite and popular culture in order to appeal to as wide a readership as possible (Jouhaud 1985, 63). Thus, when assessing their literary quality or their reliability as a source, it is necessary to consider that ‘both expressive beauty and historical truth are subordinate values: the purpose is political effectiveness. And a dirty and deficient, albeit opportune, pasquinade or a bad ‘*espinela*’ [a ten-line stanza], apt to be memorised, laughed at, and repeated can be more effective – i.e. multiplied – than perfectly elaborated serious compositions’ (Egido 1990, 341).

Similarly, several authors have noted the coexistence of oral and written communication, and the combination of resources from both worlds to reach a larger audience. Thus, both Lois Schwoerer (1977, 868) and Christian Jouhaud (1985, 26) have stressed the importance of iconographic material and, above all, of oral dissemination as tools for extending the compass of written texts to the semi-literate and illiterate elements of society, while Castillo Gómez (2016, 144) has recalled that, thanks to the interaction between the different forms of communication existing in the Early Modern Age – oral, written and visual –, some pamphlets have been considered as true mass media. More specifically, Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, analysing the pamphlet campaign generated by the spread of the Reformation in the early decades of the sixteenth century, have drawn attention to the persistence of oral communication in a world in which the printed text was coming to occupy an ever-increasing space. In their view, the growing significance of the printing press was qualified by the high cost of printed texts and widespread illiteracy among the population, so that ‘only a minority of the German-speaking population could afford to buy pamphlets and only a minority were able to read. The texts were probably read in public more often than in private and their message was heard by more people than were able to read it’ (2005, 67).

In this respect, it is worth remembering that all the writings mentioned in the present article were circulated in manuscript form, which is why a witness identified them as *escritos de mano* (handwritten papers) and the Duke of Villahermosa claimed to have had knowledge of them ‘de la manera que bulgarmente los bian las demas personas, yendo de mano en mano’.⁵⁷ On the other hand, we know that the dissemination was not limited to the capital of the kingdom. Proof of this is the appearance of *unos carteles* (a few placards) in Saragossa in mid-July 1590, at the height of the ‘Legal Phase’ of the conflict. The documentation does not provide news of the content of these *carteles*, but it does provide news of the alarm they gave to the local authorities,

⁵⁷ (in the way they were commonly seen by other people, when circulated from hand to hand). Unless otherwise stated, all testimonies mentioned in this section are taken from Gascón Pérez 2003, lxxxvi-xci.

who considered them to be ‘en muy grande desacato de S.M. y offensa desta ciudad y occasion de poder seguir por ello muy grandes alteraciones y motin en esta ciudad y reyno’.⁵⁸ Such alarm may have had some basis, as the same source explains that Saragossa was not the only place where these writings appeared: ‘muchos dellos se habían embiado por el reyno y fuera del a diversas partes’.⁵⁹

Finally, we have some interesting data on the mechanisms of diffusion of the pasquinades during the conflict, which support the idea that their content was not only available to a literate public, but that it was also accessible to uneducated people. The business of dissemination was supported by the production of handwritten copies of the texts, a task initially promoted by Antonio Pérez and in which various scribes and students collaborated. These copies were also displayed in public places, which made it easier for them to be read aloud in front of small or large groups, or, in the words of another witness, ‘otras vezes los dexavan caer en las plaças y en otras partes, para que los tomassen y viessen’.⁶⁰ When the writings were invectives against specific individuals, they were affixed to the doors of their houses or hurled through their windows, sometimes accompanied by arquebus shots. However, the individual nature of this type of attack did not prevent these pamphlets from also having a certain diffusion. From a statement by Bartolomé de Argensola we learn that ‘el dicho conde de Morata leyo al duque [de Villahermosa] unos pasquines o cartas maliciosas que le habían arrojado y fixado en las esquinas de su casa’.⁶¹ Lastly, it is worth mentioning the intervention of some ecclesiastics in the copying and dissemination of several pieces, the most intriguing case being the one described by Argensola in the following paragraph:

Sor Ynes de Aragon, monja de Santa Ines, hermana del duque [de Villahermosa], le imbio a este testigo para que diesse al duque una carta llena de amenazas contra el dicho duque y conde [de Aranda], la qual le havian dado a ella por el torno de dicho monesterio para que la imbiasse al duque; y en ella amenaza a dichos duque y conde porque se juntavan con el virrey. (Quoted in Gascón Pérez 2003, lxxxviii)⁶²

In summary, the nature of the pasquinades and the methods of their circulation enabled their messages to reach individuals from diverse social backgrounds. This draws attention once again to the crossover between the educated and the popular, on the one hand, and between the written and the oral, on the other. These links encompass not only formal but also ideological aspects, as noted by Lía Schwartz Lerner when she underlines that political satires

offer pertinent texts for rethinking the phenomenon of ‘ideological negotiations’, in Jacques Revel’s terms, which are the product of the systematic interweaving of popular forms and educated models, as characteristic of the genre as of other narrative and dramatic texts in those centuries, which have been suggestively analysed by García de Enterría, Maxime Chevalier, Augustin Redondo and Monique Joly, among other scholars. Some satirical variants reveal the strategies of solidarity deployed by certain social groups to obtain the support of the common people, others point to cultural practices of domination that cut across all social groups, and force us to redefine the poetic object, the product of concurrent ideological discourses. (1995, 153)

⁵⁸ (a very great disrespect to His Majesty and offence to this city, and occasion for very great disturbances and riots in this city and kingdom).

⁵⁹ (many of them had been sent throughout the kingdom and beyond).

⁶⁰ (other times they were dropped in the squares and elsewhere, so that they could be picked up and read).

⁶¹ (the said Count of Morata read to the Duke [of Villahermosa] some pasquinades or malicious letters that had been thrown at him and fixed upon the corners of his house).

⁶² (Sister Inés de Aragón, nun of the convent of Santa Inés, sister of the Duke [of Villahermosa], sent this witness to give the Duke a letter full of threats against the said Duke and Count [of Aranda], which had been given to her through the ‘torno’ [a revolving window to preserve the nuns’ vows of enclosure] of the said monastery so that she could send it to the Duke; and in it the said Duke and Count are threatened because they were meeting with the viceroy).

The key question in this matter is how far the ‘ideological negotiation’ described by Revel and mentioned by Schwartz Lerner could have gone. Or, applying the words of José Antonio Maravall to the case of the pasquinades, ‘whether you give the public what they want or whether you manage to make them want what you are offering them’ (1975, 195). In this respect, we must pose the question of whether the current evidence is sufficient to establish the presence of a political consciousness amongst the Aragonese, including the frequently mentioned farmers and craftsmen. Should we accept the existence of this political consciousness, it is no less difficult to discern whether it developed autonomously or whether it was activated by external influences. Maravall, in response to the question he himself had raised, concluded that ‘There is no doubt that the public is conditioned by the offer before them and that everything boils down to presenting it to them in such a way that it arouses feelings to which they seem to respond’ (*ibid.*). However, without rejecting this assertion in its entirety, it is worth contrasting it with the opinion of Christopher Hill, according to whom ‘almost by definition, a great revolution cannot take place without ideas. Most men have to believe quite strongly in some ideal before they will kill or be killed’ (1965, 1), a reflection which he develops by asserting further on that ‘men, that is to say, do not break lightly with the past: if they are to challenge conventionally accepted standards they must have an alternative body of ideas to support them’ (5).

This approach is consistent with the data presented in this essay about the dissemination of pasquinades in 1591, which suggests that ‘those who launched invectives against the King and his ministers along with proclamations in defence of the kingdom’s ‘fueros’ and liberties hoped that part of the population would be receptive to them’ (Gascón Pérez 2003, xcv). Unfortunately, the currently available sources do not allow for case studies to determine the true impact of Aragonese pasquinades on their potential audience. However there is no doubt that a connection can be made ‘between the shaping of a certain public opinion and the circulation and fixation of pasquinades, verses or libels, at least in some particularly significant periods’, as pointed out by Castillo Gómez (2009, 595), and previous research enables us to consider how a ‘body of ideas’ – to continue using the term proposed by Hill – may have germinated among the common people involved in the conflict.

It should be stressed that Aragonese constitutionalist thinking, as an alternative doctrine to the absolute power of the kings, developed on the basis of a well-established corpus of ‘fueros’ and the elaboration of a constitutionalist ideology, and was also founded on the memory of the jurisdictional conflicts between the monarchy and the institutions of the kingdom in the late fifteenth century and throughout the sixteenth century (Gascón Pérez 1999b). However, it seems safe to say that, in the case of most of Aragonese society, the awareness of belonging to a political community may have been based not so much on a thorough knowledge of the doctrine of the ‘fueros’ or the history of the kingdom – something that was only within the reach of a select minority of the population, as Carmelo Lisón Tolosana (1984, 134) has already pointed out – as on the certain possibility of being protected by the Aragonese ‘fueros’, as evidenced in a series of everyday events. Finally, in addition to the experience and memory of repeated jurisdictional disputes and daily experience of the ‘fueros’, we must also note the impact of messages disseminated through different channels by the governing institutions or other sources of authority, characterised by their intellectual complexity, to reinforce the socio-political bonds among the population (Serrano Martín 2011).

6. Conclusion: *The Pasquinades in the Aragonese Rebellion*

Such messages found a very effective channel in public ceremonies, but reached their greatest intensity during the abundant jurisdictional crises experienced since the end of the fifteenth century, which forced the ‘Diputación’ and the ‘Justicia’ to justify legal resistance to various commands from the monarchs or their officials. Their assertions were occasionally projected beyond the educated elites by means of writings aimed at mobilising popular groups in society. One of the most relevant episodes took place in the city of Teruel in 1571, during the aforementioned clerical riot. However, the main crisis was undoubtedly the Aragonese Rebellion of 1591, during which the intense campaign of popular mobilisation described above was articulated. Concerning this campaign, Egido has written that, ‘few cycles of this type of production are as complete and as attractive to observation as this one’, adding that an accurate interpretation of the texts that comprise it requires an understanding ‘of the historical and literary context in which they were born, copied, distributed, read aloud, recounted and requisitioned’, and emphasised that the moment of their creation was ‘one of those occasions when the written or spoken agitation, the word, was able to connect with “popular” movements in which the most varied social sectors participated’ (2003, x). The success of this campaign lies precisely in the fact that it sparked a major popular mobilisation which intensified a conflict whose origins lay in the defence of Antonio Pérez, but which ended up becoming an episode of resistance against Philip II. Undoubtedly, both the circulation of pamphlets and the internal dynamics of the Aragonese Rebellion gave to these events a scale comparable to other contemporary political crises. It is no coincidence that during the seventeenth century the ‘pamphlet war’ was part of every major political crisis (Schwoerer 1977, 848). Yet, it was also common for calls to the popular classes for mobilisation to change the course of events, often with unexpected consequences for the ruling groups. Thus, in the opinion of Briggs and Burke,

These events followed a recurrent pattern which may be described as a “sorcerer’s apprentice” model of political change in early modern Europe. Again and again, disputes within elites led to their appealing for support to a wider group, often described as “the people”. In order to reach this wider group, the elites could not rely on face-to-face communication and so they turned to public debates and to pamphlets. The appeal to the people was often successful. Indeed, it was sometimes more successful than those initiating it expected or even wanted. On a number of occasions, frightened by what they had started, the elite tried to damp down debate, only to discover that they were too late and that the forest fire was out of control. (2005, 62)

In this sense, Kenneth Scholberg was only partly right when he concluded that ‘neither the bitter satires of the Portuguese nor the vehement pasquinades of the Aragonese changed the course of history’ (1979, 143). Focusing here on the Aragonese case, and recalling the terms used by Virgil and his seventeenth-century interpreters, the Aragonese Rebellion deserves to be remembered for both its tumultuous – masculine – and its literary – feminine – features. Although pasquinades did not prevent Philip II from eventually prevailing, they helped build a complex resistance movement that involved significant sectors of every stratum of Aragonese society.

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'De los famosos hechos de los yndios cañares y de sus privilegios' Don Pedro Purqui and the Early Modern Andean Chronicle by Martín de Murua

Lisl Schoepflin
National Autonomous University of Mexico
(lisl.schoepflin@gmail.com)

Abstract

The article considers the background and interests of don Pedro Purqui of Cañari descent in the late sixteenth century in Cuzco, Peru. Purqui made distinct interventions in an Inca-centric history project and, more broadly, as an Indigenous leader and intellectual in colonial Cuzco's heterogenous and multivocal 'lettered city'. His literary efforts contributed to the conceptualization of Cañari social memory as part of a larger process of ethnogenesis during the early modern period. The case study examines legal and chronicle records in juxtaposition with the Galvin Murua (1590-1596), compiled by the Basque Mercedarian friar, Martín de Murua. Purqui's strategic efforts aimed to defend and promote the Cañari's privileged but precarious status of nobility and heritage in an emergent and contested colonial context. The analysis demonstrates that the seeming contradictions of the Cañari, locally in Cuzco and regionally in the Andes, involved multivalent, complementary elements in iteratively conceived ethnic identity and social memory.

Keywords: Cañari, Cuzco, Iberian, Inca, Murua

0. *La Famossa Ystoria*

Probanza hecha del origen e creación e primera posesión de los grandes señores Reyes Incas y señores que fueron de este Reyno ... Lengua del padre fray Martin de Morua de la dicha orden para averiguar la declaración que de ello tomo de ... don Pedro Purqui cacique principal [?] de los yndios [*roto* Cañaris]. (Murua 2004, under f. 5v)¹

¹ ([An] Investigation into the origin and creation of the great lords, Inca Kings and nobles of this Kingdom ... [It is the] translation of Fray Martín

A now hidden, pasted-over folio that includes an original title and native declaration from 15 May 1590 describes how don Pedro Purqui (Purque, Porque) of Cañari ethnic descent participated in an early manuscript version of an early modern chronicle on Inca history and Spanish colonization, titled *Historia del origen* (see figure 1).² He joined four other Inca leaders and intellectuals in Cuzco in the Viceroyalty of Peru. Unfortunately, the Basque Mercedarian friar, Martín de Murua (1566?-1616),³ later covered the native declaration with a paradisiacal Andean landscape, erasing their recognition from plain view. However, fiber optic scanning in 2007-2008 at the Getty Manuscript department allowed scholars to decipher the deteriorated text (Cummins and Ossio 2013). Unlike the other Inca collaborators, *Historia del origen* includes a chapter devoted to the Cañari in Cuzco that identifies don Pedro as their captain (Murua 2004, f. 69r). Correspondingly, a notarial document from 27 June 1595, identified don Pedro as *cacique principal* (native leader) of the Santa Ana parish and *alcalde* (mayor) of the Cañari in Cuzco. His wife, doña Francisca Manco, had died. The record marked his land donation in the Santa Ana parish to his legitimate son, Joan Sánchez Urco.⁴ In fact, notarial records between 1572 and the late 1590s consistently listed don Pedro as the *cacique principal* and *alcalde* of the Cañari in the Parish of Santa Ana.

At first glance, Purqui's involvement with an Inca-centric history is surprising. Scholars often highlight the competitive relationship between the Cañari and Inca that extended from at least the fifteenth century to independence in the early nineteenth century (Gisbert and Mesa 1982, 180; Dean 1999, 186-197; Amado Gonzales 2017, 184-199). During this period Cañari alliances rapidly shifted under Inca and Iberian colonial rule (Solari Pita 2022, 34). The Cañari's ambivalent reputation in the early colonial period becomes obvious with their negative portrayal in the final version of Murua's chronicle, *Historia general del Piru* (1616). Friar Martín removed the favorable Galvin chapter and replaced the chapter with descriptions of thieves, witches, and traitors. The disparaging and distrustful portrayal of the Cañari and Chachapoya echoes what the Andean artist and author, don Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala (c. 1535-1550?), shared in his own chronicle, *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (c. 1615). As such, Purqui's literary intervention is poignant. His advocacy for the Cañari as an Indigenous intellectual had him deeply enmeshed in the polyphonous and contested colonial discourse in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

de Murua of said order [Mercedarian] to discover the declaration that was taken from ... don Pedro Purqui native leader of the Indians [*missing* of the Cañaris]). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the author.

² Cummins 2014, 39, 59 n. 20.

³ Friar Martín's last name has been spelled with an accent (i.e. Murúa). This article uses the Basque historian, F. Borja de Aguinalalde's (2017) spelling, based on his genealogical investigations (i.e. Murua). For citation purposes of previous manuscript publications, I retained the old spelling. 'Morua' is used by native scribes, including Guamán Poma in his chronicle (c. 1615, f. 647 [661]).

⁴ Archivo Regional del Cuzco, Antonio de Salas, Prot. 18, 1596-1597, 27 June 1595, ff. 566r-567r.



Figure 1 – 1590 title page with Andean endorsers (Murua 2004, f. 5v, behind). Courtesy of Sean Galvin

Andean intellectuals in the early modern period inhabited multiple discourses and memory practices, including ritual and storytelling activities, *kipu* arts (sophisticated Andean textile recording device), and place-making ceremonies. Spanish colonization and the introduction of alphabetic writing transformed Indigenous recording practices to include literacy through legal and historical projects (Salomon and Niño-Murcia 2011; Puente Luna 2018). Rather than understanding literacy as a univocal and independent medium (Goody 1977; Ong 1982), Indigenous intellectuals engaged with multiple, interdependent literacies and processes of interpretation and legibility.⁵ They could be literate or not. This multivocal network of practices involved lettered, pictorial, textile, architectural and performance literacies of particular social groups and interpretative communities (Fish 1982; Bakhtin 1984; Rappaport 1990; Boone and Mignolo 1994; Rappaport and Cummins 1994; Rappaport and Cummins 2012, 6; Ramos and Yannakakis 2014; Leon Llerena 2023).

The illuminated chronicle, *Historia General del Piru* (1616), compiled by Murua is an extraordinary example of a chronicle entangled in the polyphonous cultural landscape of early modern Spanish America. The palimpsest of Inca history and Spanish colonialization was produced during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in the Southern Andes. The history, written in Spanish and Quechua (Inca imperial language), left two extensively illustrated and manipulated manuscript versions (respectively known as the Galvin Murua [1590-1596] and Getty Murua [1616]). During his multi-phased production process,⁶ friar Martín collab-

⁵ According to Laura Leon Llerena (2023, 6-9) the concept of legibility or illegibility historicizes literacy by separating the technical ability to read and write from the cultural and social expectations and processes associated with producing meaning.

⁶ The production of the Galvin and Getty manuscripts consisted of multiple campaigns and phases (Adorno and Boserup 2008; Turner 2014; Trentelman 2014, and others).

orated with various native Andean artists, scribes, and authors, including the seminal author, don Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala.⁷ The manuscript's multiauthorial composition allowed for Indigenous participants to strategically promote their perspectives and voices within the unequal colonial context (Schoepflin 2022).

In Don Pedro's background, the process of ethnogenesis identified in Europe, South America and elsewhere has been a significant component to studies on the Cañari (Solari Pita 2022, 33). Ethnic identity is a political act enacted through collective and individual strategies, including the rearticulation of the past in contemporary contexts. The past expressed through history, myth, and memory is a vital resource for interpreting and conceptualizing the present (Rappaport 1990). The Cañari engaged in centuries of ethnogenesis in response to Inca and Spanish rule and categorization. Overlapping with Purqui's life, anthropologist Frank Salomon identified historical antecedents to the Cañari's unusual and radical 'reorganization of collective memory' (1987, 208) towards a long process of 'Inca-ism' during Spanish colonization. Despite firm ethnohistorical and archaeological evidence of the Cañari's distinct, non-Inca origin and anti-Inca political actions, a 'structural amnesia' (*ibid.*) since the Spanish invasion enabled them to adopt Inca genealogy as part of their collective legitimacy. The collective native experience of Spanish violence, coercion, and oppression throughout the colonial period blurred the lines between Cañari and Inca experiences. The conditions supported the development of a pan-Andean Indigenous awareness that attached itself to a non-localized Inca identity. The shift played an important role in pro-Inca ideology and political movements in the colonial period, including the Tupac Amaru II rebellion in the late eighteenth century (Szeminski 1982). Their process ultimately informed the development of independent nation states in the Andes (Hirschkind 1995; Solari Pita 2022). Our case study on Purqui's literary intervention offers additional early colonial evidence to the slow rise of 'Inca-ism' in the collective memory and political strategy of the Cañari in Cuzco during the Spanish colonial period.

This article examines legal and chronicle records in juxtaposition with the Galvin Murua to consider don Pedro Purqui's role in an Inca-centric history project and, more broadly, as an Andean leader and intellectual in colonial Cuzco's heterogenous and multivocal 'lettered city' (Rama 1996). The analysis demonstrates that the seeming contradictions of the Cañari locally in Cuzco and regionally in the Andes involved multivalent, complementary elements in iteratively conceived ethnic identity and social memory. Don Pedro defended and promoted the privileged status of Cañari nobility and memory in colonial Cuzco society with interrelated legal, cultural, and sociopolitical strategies. While likely not literate in alphabetic writing,⁸ he used the chronicle genre to reformulate competing and allied visions of Inca and Cañari history and social memory. His literary interventions offer evidence and contribute to the Cañari's protracted processes of ethnogenesis. He countered other simultaneously powerful forces that undercut their positive reputation, which are visible in the compositional changes and erasures in the Getty Murua.

My study begins with a general review of the Cañari's migration, settlement, and social status in the Cuzco region during the Inca and early Spanish colonial period. Particularly, I consider the Cañari's socio-political and cultural power in colonial Cuzco through their impressive role in festival activities, such as the beatification of San Ignacio de Loyola in 1610. Section two examines don Pedro's participation as a witness in the 1580s on behalf of Inca descendants in their legal claims for

⁷ Guamán Poma contributed over 100 images and labels to the Galvin manuscript. He used a successive working schedule between c. 1596 - c. 1600. Four were transferred to the final Getty version (Adorno and Boserup 2008, 43).

⁸ His signature does not appear in any document, including his land donation where it would have been customary (Archivo Regional del Cuzco, Antonio de Salas, Prot. 18, 1596-1597, 27 June 1595, ff. 566r-567r).

their rights and privileges attached to their noble status. Section three analyzes don Pedro's literary interventions and conceptualizations of the Cañari position in colonial Cuzco in the Galvin Murua and subsequent changes and erasures during Murua's redactions for the Getty Murua.

1. *Cañari in Cuzco*

The Cañari originated from the northern provinces of Acay and Cañar in present-day Ecuador, with central populations in Hatun Cañar, Cañarbamba, and Tomebamba (Faron-Bartels 2001, 91; Decoster and Najarro 2016, 89). In their original territory they are generally understood by historians and archaeologists as having a pluri-ethnic population though ethnically distinct from the Inca (Alcina Franch 1980; Oberem 1981; Burgos Guevara 2003). They likely functioned as independent chiefdoms that allied against outside aggressors such as the Inca. The dialogical process promoted a shared ethnic identity fostered by Inca categorization of non-Inca groups, which developed with Spanish colonization (Hirschkind 1995). They spoke a shared but dialectically different language, of which only a few words remain (Faron-Bartels 2001, 107). Colonial chronicles relate that the Inca rulers, Topa Inca Yupanqui and Huayna Capac, had been only recently conquered by the Cañari in the fifteenth century.

The Inca relocated large numbers of Cañari as *mitmaq* (*mitmaj*, *mitima*, *mitmaqkuna*) to various locations in the Inca state, including Cuzco, Yucay Valley, Lima, Jauja, Huánuco, Huamanga, Cajamarca, Yaro, and Cajabamba, Porcón, and Chiara in present-day Peru and Copacabana, La Paz, and Sucre in Bolivia (Hirschkind 1995, 322; Solari Pita 2022). It has been estimated that, out of an original population of 50,000 Cañari, the Inca relocated around 35,000 (70%) to other parts in the Andes (Pärssinen 1992). *Mitmaq* as an Inca institution classified any transplanted person and included whole families accompanied by their ethnic leader (Salomon 2007, 158). Far from uniform, they could be relocated for various reasons, including punishment or demonstration of trust, but always to carry out various kinds of services (Espinoza Soriano 1973). The fierce reputation of the Cañari secured them the position of guards and soldiers for the Inca, roles that they then played for the Spaniards (Oberem 1976 and 1981).

The many alliances and switches the Cañari made during the Inca civil war and Spanish invasion can appear bewildering. Immediately after the death of his father and Inca ruler, Huayna Capac, Atahualpa sent gifts via Cañari emissaries from Quito in the north to his half-brother Huascar, in Cuzco. Despite the rebuke from his mother, Rahua Ocllo, Huascar suspiciously rebuffed the gifts and ordered the execution of the lead Cañari messenger and his skin transformed into a drum (Betanzos 1987, 210). However, in the outbreak of the Inca civil war between the half-brothers, the Cañari likely identified an opportunity for independence and aligned with Huascar, despite entreaties by Atahualpa.⁹ In retaliation, Atahualpa ordered a genocidal war against the Cañari that left approximately fifteen women for one man (Herrera y Tordesillas 1615, Book 3, Ch. 17; Murua 2008, ff. 105v-106r; Decoster and Najarro 2016, 90). After the death of Huascar, the Cañari immediately aligned themselves with the Spaniards to defeat Atahualpa and his army (Cieza de León 1984, 208, 315-317). While the changeability of Cañari's alliances

⁹ Pedro Cieza de León describes a particular instance early in the Inca civil war when Atahualpa sought support from the Cañari. However, the Cañari had already agreed to support Huascar. One version says they took Atahualpa prisoner while another version says that Huascar's captains took Atahualpa prisoner. In either case, Atahualpa escaped (Cieza de León 1984, 24). Murua offers extensive description of the changing alliances of the Cañari between Atahualpa and Huascar in the Getty Murua (Murua 2008, ff. 98r-129r).

can appear inconsistent, the Cañari leaders recognized favorable conditions to release themselves from oppressive rule and to expand their territory and independence.

A second wave of Cañari arrived from the north as part of the Spanish military offensive against the Inca. They were participants in the brief 'Hispano-Andean alliances' between groups in Huamanga (Stern 1981), Quito (Salomon 1987, 212), and the Chachapoyas, Wanka (Espinoza Soriano 1967 and 1971-1972). In the Cuzco area, they often inhabited available land in their efforts at territorial expansion and control (Decoster and Najarro 2016; Duffait 2016, 84). In the subsequent decades the Cañari repeatedly helped the Crown as spies and soldiers to defeat the Inca, including the uprisings in Cuzco and Lima led by Manco Inca, a son of Huayna Capac and half-brother to Atahualpa and Huascar.¹⁰ During the Spanish civil war, Cañaris consistently supported the Crown to defeat Spanish rebel bands. However, Spanish exploitation and oppression of the native groups led to a breakdown in these alliances by the 1560s (Stern 1981, 486). Nonetheless, the loyalty of the Cañari to the Crown repeatedly garnered them royal privileges and favors, including tribute exemption.

The Cañari achieved unprecedented power and status in colonial Cuzco society. Their favored position fostered a competition with the local Inca elite or *inca de la sangre* (inca by blood, also called *inca orejones* or big-eared Inca). They lived in the Urubamba Valley in Huayna Capac's 'house of the Inca' and in the hills of Carmenca, which was then renamed the Parish of Santa Ana (Decoster and Najarro 2016, 90). The dominant leadership of don Francisco Chilche helped the Cañari to overshadow other parish inhabitants, including the Chachapoya, *yanaconas* (native servants), and other non-Incas. Chilche famously killed an Inca champion on behalf of the Spanish conquistadores during the Inca siege of Cuzco in 1536, which he provocatively reenacted in 1555 during Corpus Christi celebrations.¹¹ The Cañari held various judicial functions as soldiers, guards for the prison and arms storage, messengers, and executioners, in addition to participating in and maintaining order during festivals.

In the 1570s, Viceroy Francisco de Toledo (1515-1582) was a significant force in the tension between the Cañari and Inca. During his tenure, he aimed to reorganize and equalize natives Cusqueños, to increase income for the Spanish Crown, and to support evangelization efforts. His social reorganization included imposing tribute payments on all Andeans, which included ending historical exemptions for Inca descendants and *yanaconas*. In contrast, Toledo confirmed on 11 August 1572 that 'in the war and in the time of conquest', the Cañari and Chachapoya maintain tax exemptions and other special privileges. In exchange they continued to provide Cañari special services to Spanish officials and uphold their loyalty to the Spanish Crown (Toledo 1986, 199). In the same decree, Toledo ordered that all *caciques principales* of each parish are registered to collect tribute. The *alcalde* (mayor), Licenciado Polo de Ondegardo (c. 1530-1575) and other officials completed the census on 13, 14 and 22 August.

¹⁰ After initially supporting the Spaniards, the *conquistadores*' disrespectful behavior eventually led Manco Inca to resist. In 1536 he laid siege to Cuzco and eventually established an Inca stronghold near Vilcabamba (Hemming 1970, 173-183).

¹¹ De la Vega (1966, part 2, 1417-1418, cited by Dean 1999, 58-59, 181. Francisco Chilche was a *mitimaq* brought to Cuzco under Huayna Capac and designated as a *yanacona* in service of the Inca. Years later he presented himself to Francisco Pizarro in Limatambo and offered his allegiance to defeat the Inca. For his loyalty, he received land in Yucay Valley and titles of *cacique* and *alcalde* in Yucay Valley and the Carmenca neighborhood in the Santa Ana Parish (Archivo Regional del Cuzco, Libro de cabildo del Cuzco, no. 3, box 2, 37, ff. 37r-v and 67r-v; Villanueva Urteaga 1970, 7; González Pujana 1982, 102). According to Murua (2008, f. 169r) and Guamán Poma (1616, f. 443 [445]), he poisoned Sayre Tupac out of jealousy and married his widow, Inca *ñusta*, doña Paula Cusihuarca. Also see Trujillo 1948, 63; Valcárcel 1949; Villanueva Urteaga 1970, 1-185; Covey and Amado González 2008, 23-24; Decoster and Najarro 2016, 91-92; Amado Gonzales 2017, 91-93, and others.

The earliest identified reference of don Pedro Purqui, our protagonist, was his identification as a *cacique principal* of the Santa Ana Parish in this census.¹² Simultaneously, Toledo had grown impatient with Inca rulers in Vilcabamba or never agreed with the previous administration's attempts to negotiate with them. In May 1572 the viceroy imprisoned previously loyal and compliant Cuzco Inca descendants, including Carlos Inca, for supposedly planning a revolt with the Inca descendants in Vilcabamba. The prison guards were Cañari. A few months later, the Inca men were charged as guilty and exiled. Building further resentment, the Cañari oversaw their extremely dangerous and inhospitable journey to Lima. Finally, in August 1572 Toledo sent bands of Spaniards, Cañaris, and Chachapoyas to pursue the young Inca ruler, Tupac Amaru, in the steep, forested mountain terrain surrounding the last stronghold of Inca sovereignty in Vilcabamba.¹³ According to Murua's description, Chilche led Cañari soldiers during the final attacks (Murua 2008, f. 169r). Tupac Amaru and his wife were eventually captured, brought to Cuzco, and executed on 24 September 1572. Over the course of the sixteenth century, the Cañari, Inca, and Spaniards created an entangled web of alliances and social memory practices that they publicly performed and reinscribed during festivals and ceremonies.

Colonial ceremonies poignantly contextualize don Pedro's participation in Murua's history project and illustrate the Cañaris' symbolic and socio-political status in colonial Cuzco. In the words of art historian Carolyn Dean, during colonial festival processions and their visual representations, 'Inkas, Cañaris, Chachapoyas, and no doubt others[,] sought to authorize competing versions of the past' (1999, 197). Inca elite displayed their acculturation to the colonial paradigm and submission to the Crown while also asserting their Inca heritage and rightful claims to power and prestige (Cummins 1991; Amado Gonzales 2017, 151). For example, an anonymous author (possibly Francisco de Avila) recounted a 24-day festival held in Cuzco in May 1610 to celebrate the beatification of San Ignacio de Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order (Cummins 2005, 38, n. 49). The account described the atmosphere of Christian Andean celebration in Cuzco. Beginning on Monday 3 May, processions from the native parishes of Belén, Santiago, Hospital de Naturales, and San Blas streamed daily into the center. The festivities included Andean music, dance, and dramatic representations of the Inca past. Andean commoners carried Inca representatives of the eleven Inca rulers through the city in litters in the pre-Hispanic tradition of Inca kings. The elite Inca descendant, Don Alonso Topa Atauchi, led the procession. He was adorned in the finest textile and royal paraphernalia, including the *mascapaycha* or Inca royal tassel.

Similarly, the Cañari utilized festivals to assert their own heritage of martial prowess and privileged status (Dean 1999, 161-197). On Sunday, during the festival day of the Basques, the Santa Ana parish and the Cañari entered Cuzco's main plaza. The record describes how, '[They] put in front three hundred Cañari soldiers armed with spades, pikes, and many arquebuses, and very well dressed [they] placed [themselves] in the plaza ... They did not enter the church,

¹² Toledo ordered that all *yndios yanaconas* and *yndios cuzqueños* (Inca descendants living in Cuzco) who were not assigned to an *encomienda* (royal grant of Indigenous labor and tribute to a Spaniard) had to be registered to pay tribute to the Spanish Crown. Two of the Inca witnesses in the Galvín Murua and their relatives were also included in the census. Don Francisco Chalco Yupangui, don Luis Chalco Yupangui's father and outspoken leader for the San Sebastián parish and descendant of Viracocha, was listed as a *cacique principal*. Huayna Capac's descendants in San Cristóbal parish and part of don Martín García de Loyola's *encomienda* listed don Martín Quispe Topa as the eight-year-old son of don Hernando Pomacapi (twenty-six years old) and Beatriz Chimbo Urma (thirty years old) (Villanueva Urteaga 1931, 232-233; Aparicio Vega 1963, 119-126; Ossio 2014, 28; Amado Gonzales 2016, 100; Schoepflin 2022, 48).

¹³ An 11 August 1572 *auto* (order) by Toledo cites select native Cuzqueans' support for an uprising led by the Inca ruler, Tupac Amaru (Villanueva Urteaga 1931, 230; Aparicio Vega 1963, 119-128; Puente Luna 2016, 18; González-Díaz and Figueroa Ortíz 2022).

which was full of Spaniards and more than 5,000 Indians' (Romero 1923, 447). Befitting their bifurcated militaristic role, the Cañaris reenacted battle scenes during the Inca conquests. The reenactments included the Cañari conquest of the Canas of Anacona for the Inca. Subsequently, they performed how the Inca vanquished the Cañari under Huayna Capac's command, including the Yahuarcocha origin story – a lake of blood named in memory of the many who died fleeing into it. The Getty Murua describes the story in Huayna Capac's life history (Murua 2008, f. 72r). The prisoners and booty of the Inca conquest were then symbolically offered to the *corregidor* (administrative judge) as a show of submission to the crown's authority. These encounters of social memory and ethnic identity embodied the complex relationships among and between the Cañari, Inca and Iberians in colonial Cuzco society. Their strategies encompassed a spectrum of competition, negotiation, and alignment. Don Pedro, as a Cañari leader and intellectual, complemented these collective efforts in the public sphere with strategic interventions in Cuzco's 'lettered city' and legal process.

2. *Lawsuits and Alliances: Purqui as Witness for Inca Descendants*

A heavily deteriorated notarial record reveals that don Pedro participated as a witness in a *probanza* (evidentiary proof) on behalf of Inca descendants. In response to Toledo's multiple efforts to undercut the power of Cuzco's noble Inca in the 1570s, elites launched a legal campaign to fight his decrees.¹⁴ After victories and setbacks, in 1579-1580 the native *alcalde mayor*, don Francisco Sayre (son of Paullo Inca and Mama Ussica or Doña Catalina and grandson of the 12th Inca ruler, Huayna Capac), directed on behalf of the Inca descendants of the eleven *ayllus* (Andean social unit) a petition and *probanza* to continue their campaign.¹⁵ The witnesses were composed of a diverse and overlapping group of sympathetic conquistadores, inhabitants of Cuzco, *encomenderos* (grant holder of native labor and tribute), priests, and non-Inca native *caciques*, *principales* and elders from the surrounding region. Through a series of six pre-formulated questions, the witnesses confirmed the extent and widespread recognition of the social and economic crisis that the *inca orejones* in Cuzco had suffered in the sixteenth century. Women, children, and commoners were predictably excluded. The answers highlighted the *inca orejones'* consistent and unceasing loyalty to the Spanish Crown during and after the Inca revolt led by Manco Inca and their pre-Hispanic privileged status. This assertion directly countered Toledo's previous accusations of a rebellion supported by Cuzco's Inca descendants. The legal formula also followed the required terms of the Iberian *hidalgo* (lesser nobility). Inca descendants repeated this legal strategy throughout the colonial period.

Don Pedro Purqui, 'Native leader of the Cañari Indians who are in the fort [Sacayhuamán and Carmenca] of this city' presented the last testimony in the petition by a native Andean, recorded in 1580 or 1581 (Espinoza Soriano 1977, 107).¹⁶ Unfortunately, deterioration in the original document destroyed most of his testimony. The remainder includes the following:

People so principal that they had their *yanaconas* and servants and were served. And this he responds. 5. To the fifth question I say that this witness knows that the said Incas, almost all of them, [they] served the *marqués* don Francisco Pizarro and his captains in all the things that they ordered and occupied in

¹⁴ For a full examination of the lawsuit and transcripts, see Puente Luna 2016.

¹⁵ The list excludes representatives from the Huascar kin group, with the assumption that the last member, don Alonso Tito Atauchí, nephew of Huascar and son of Tito Atauchí, had died (Espinoza Soriano 1977, 84).

¹⁶ Unlike the Spanish testimonies, there are no dates for the native testimonies. The last Spanish testimony was completed on 12 February 1580, and the *probanza* ended in August 1580 (82).

the service of your Majesty. And this he responded. 6. To the sixth question I say that this witness says what is in the previous question and to refer to it. And this he responded. And I swear what was said is the truth according to my official office. I sign the said interpretation, don Joan Collafina. Before me, Luis de Quesada. (107-108)

The first line we see is the last part of his answer to Question Four, which asked to confirm the state of impoverishment of the *inca orejones*. Don Pedro indicated his respect for the Inca by repeating a descriptor used by other witnesses: 'gente tan principal'. Don Pedro's response to Question Five also agreed with other testimonies by reiterating the loyalty and submission of *inca orejones* in Cuzco to the Crown during the Spanish and Inca revolts. Unlike most of the non-Inca native testimonies, and like many of the Iberian witnesses, Purqui did not acknowledge in his answer to Question Five the abuse and mistreatment that Manco Inca suffered under the conquistadores, particularly by Hernando Pizarro and Gonzalo Pizarro, in their incessant search for gold and silver. Nor did Purqui confirm that the abuse justified Inca resistance. This perspective aligns with the Cañari's role in siding with the Spaniards against Manco Inca's followers in 1536 and the incursion into Vilcabamba to capture Tupac Amaru in 1572. Nonetheless, he upheld pre-Hispanic precedents that maintained the elite status of the Inca. His answer also referred to Question Two that confirmed the *inca orejones* as the rulers and governors of Peru. As part of their noble status, *yanacona* attended to the Inca descendents – a precedent Francisco Pizarro and subsequent viceroys continued to respect. According to other witnesses, the *inca orejones* never provided personal services until *Corregidor* Gabriel Paniagua de Loaysa ordered and harassed them. For Question Six on the destruction of Spanish royal property by the Inca, Purqui referred to his response in Question Five, possibly to underline Inca loyalty to the Spaniards.

Don Pedro's participation in the *probanza* reveals a direct link of the Cañari with the efforts of Inca elite to protect their noble status in colonial Cuzco and challenges the interpretation by many scholars who argue that an exclusively competitive relationship existed among ethnic Indigenous groups in Cuzco. Having witnessed attacks on the Inca by Viceroy Toledo and his administration, the Cañari must have been acutely aware of how Spaniards might change their views towards the social status of any Andean elite and the precarity of their own position. Purqui recognized that supporting the precedent of Inca nobility benefited their own privileged position. The *probanza* evidences that don Pedro's participation in the Galvin Murua c. 1590s, as the only non-Inca Cañari witness, was founded on a network of alliances and experiences. He possibly considered that a literary intervention in a chronicle could offer a more robust and complex discourse on historical and socio-political conceptualizations than the more limited and mediated legal framework. He could advocate and protect his Cañari community to a broader Spanish and transatlantic audience beyond Cuzco's regional courts and officials.

3. Don Pedro's Intervention in the Galvin Murua

The ambivalent and fluid reputation of the Cañari in colonial Cuzco is exemplified in the differences between the Murua manuscripts. In the Galvin version, don Pedro introduced positive associations. In contrast to the negative portrayal in the Getty, the Cañari are repeatedly described for their reputation as fierce warriors and their role as privileged guards and favored soldiers for the Inca. Quoted below, one chapter on Inca processions and the *cuyusmanco* (royal Inca complex) describes how the Cañari and Chachapoya inhabited exclusive royal Inca spaces:

La multitud de los cañares y chachapoyas, que era cierta gente de guerra, como luego veremos, se hacía la guarda a la persona del Inga. Tenían éstos su salario, y eran privilegiados y reservados de los servicios personales [como se dirá a su tiempo] los capitanes deste guarda serán de mucha autoridad y cuando iba el gran ynga a la guerra iban muy juntos a él y por esto tenían muy gran salario y andaban acompañados de gente lucida.¹⁷ (Murua 2004, f. 55v)

Often on the verso folio side Murua inserted supplemental descriptions to chapters in the Galvin Murua.¹⁸ Phrases such as ‘como luego veremos’ and ‘como se dirá a su tiempo’¹⁹ in the above quote allude to subsequent Cañari chapter. Like Ch. 17 on the Cañari, the supplemental information highlights the significant and complementary role of the Cañari in Inca imperial society. The similar perspective shared between the supplemental texts and Ch. 17 suggest Purqui contributed to both.

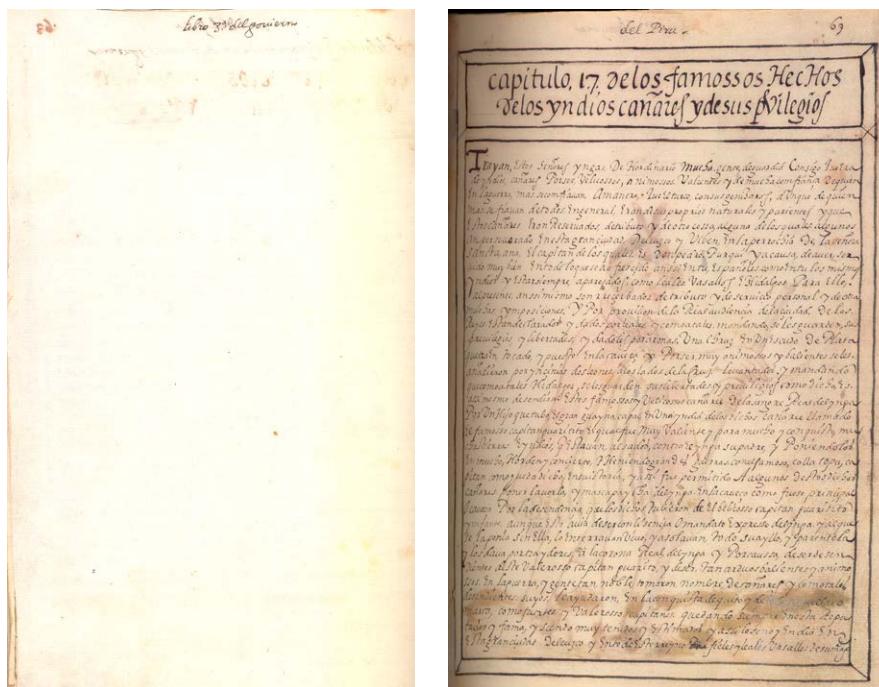


Figure 2 – Cañari Book 3, Ch. 17 and blank facing folio (Murua 2004, ff. 68v-69r). Courtesy of Sean Galvin

The text in Galvin Ch. 17 (see figure 2) on the Cañari identifies don Pedro Purqui as their captain. Significantly, he was the only Indigenous collaborator from the 1590 declaration who was also explicitly identified in the account. Surprisingly, despite Chilche’s established persona in sixteenth-century Cuzco society, the 1590 chapter excluded him. Instead, the narrative

¹⁷ (The multitude of Cañaris and Chachapoyas, that were truly people of war, as we will see, [they] guarded the Inca. They had their salary and were privileged and reserved from personal services [as will be told in time]. The captains of this guard were of great authority and when the great Inca went to war they went with him, and for this they had a large salary and traveled accompanied by magnificent people).

¹⁸ Other references include Murua 2004, ff. 51r, 52v, 58v, 66r, 67v, 142r.

¹⁹ (as we will see); (as will be told in time).

describes the coat of arms granted to the Cañari by the Spanish Crown – a cross on a shield of silver that the Cañari embellished with two lions on each side to signify their bravery. The narrator threads a fine needle to justify their unique status in Cuzco – one that intertwines their loyalty to the Spaniards and their Inca descent through Captain Guaritito (Varitito). ‘Como queda dicho en su historia’,²⁰ he was a Cañari warrior and son born out of wedlock to the eleventh Inca ruler, Huayna Capac.²¹ Guaritito was a valiant conqueror for his father and fought in many wars with Captain Colla Topa. Because of their Inca descent some Cañari leaders wore the Inca *mascapaycha* or royal tassel but only ‘con licencia o mandato expreso del ynga’,²² presumably in the pre-Hispanic era. The punishment for wearing the fringe without permission was to bury the transgressor alive, to destroy his *ayllu* and kin, and to mark him as a traitor to the Royal Inca. The narrator concludes that many people took their names because of their reputation as fierce warriors. They maintained a great reputation as descendants who helped in the conquest of Quito and Lacomarca (Guamanca) and remained faithful and loyal vassals of the Spanish Crown.

The chapter composition incorporates all the significant legal and performed markers of Spanish colonial nobility and vassalage. Familiar words from notarial records such as privileges and liberty, tribute and personal service, vassal, *hidalgo*, and captain are used. The Murua manuscripts’ chapters on captains describe the lives and accomplishments of male Indigenous leaders who were not rulers. The description of the Cañari coat of arms echoes the one granted to Chilche by the Crown – a silver cross with two lions and the words valor and loyalty written on each side (Iglesias 1985, 28). Only kings had the power to grant coats of arms in the Spanish empire. Across the Spanish Americas the heraldic emblems became contested tools of negotiation for Indigenous elites. Native subjects deployed coats of arms to illustrate the king’s acknowledgement of their noble status, their loyalty to the Spanish crown, and the confirmation of certain privileges. Coats of arms became a strategic tool to display superiority over other Andeans through the imagistic blending of pre-Hispanic and colonial markers of authority, ancestry and worth.²³ The Murua manuscripts incorporated fictitious and real coats of arms throughout the account. They functioned as a key visual tool to establish authority and legitimacy for the Mercedarian order, Inca kingdom, and royal Inca kinship, including fictitious emblems in the *coya* (Inca queen) portrait in the Galvin version by Guamán Poma and then copied into the Inca ruler portraits in the Getty version by Murua. Purqui’s textual addition of the Cañari coat of arms intentionally signals the Cañari status among the privileged Indigenous elite in Spanish American society.

In addition to aligning with Iberian criteria for nobility, the language and content of Ch. 17 is decidedly more conciliatory with the Inca than we would expect. The narrative signals alliances with the Inca through Guaritito’s descent and leaders associated with pre-Hispanic Inca rule, such as Colla Topa. Guaritito was likely involved in the Inca civil war by siding with Huascar and the Spanish pacification campaign. Guaritito’s mother, Cañari Vinca, was Huayna Capac’s secondary wife during the northern campaigns (Murua 2004, f. 48r). The Inca used interethnic marriages with elite woman to build alliances across their territory. According to

²⁰ (as it is said in their history).

²¹ A Guaritito is mentioned as Inca Capitán Capac Guaritito in both the Galvin (2004, f. 43r) and Getty (2008, f. 212r) manuscripts. The Galvin f. 43r chapter on Capitán Capac Guaritito was left blank. In the Getty he is identified as the son of Ynga Yupanqui and brother of Topa Ynga Yupanqui.

²² (with the license or express permission of the Inca).

²³ Cummins 1998, 91-148; Estenssoro Fuchs 2003, 101; Ramos 2005; Dominguez Torres 2011; Martínez 2014, and others.

the text, Guaritito led battles against rebellions in defense of his father, Huayna Capac. Noticeably, the chapter excluded his leadership during the Inca civil war against his half-brother, Atahualpa, who ruled in Cañari territory in the northern Andes. According to Miguel Cabello Valboa, Guaritito actively turned Francisco Pizarro against Atahualpa through an account of the cruelty inflicted by his captain's Challcochima and Quizquiz (1951, 474).

The alliance between Guaritito and Colla Topa against rebellions again aligned the Cañari with the Inca empire and its descendants. Information from the Murua manuscripts associate various timeframes, Inca rulers, and geographies to Colla Topa, but he was unquestionably a vibrant Inca captain in the social memory of Inca descendants. In the Galvin Murua, Colla Topa is mentioned as a leader under Pachacuti Inga Yupangui. 'Vencían con industria y a costa de tanta multitud, como lo hizo el valiente y fuerte Collatopa' (2004, f. 60v).²⁴ In the Getty Murua, Colla Topa is described as descended from Inca ruler, Viracocha Inga (2008, f. 65r) and captain to Topa Ynga Yupangui along with the Inca leaders Guaritito, Sinchiroca, and Huaillo Cusi Arauchi (f. 212r). Under Inca ruler Huayna Capac, he participated in conquest activity in northern Andes, such as Carangui, with Inca leaders Mihi and Auquitoma (f. 67v). He was part of the funerary rituals for Huayna Capac, including memorializing the Inca ruler's memories in *khipus*. Under the command of Atahualpa, he joined other relatives and leaders to ritually carry Huayna Capac's body to Cuzco. However, out of suspicion of his half-brother's intentions, Huascar took Colla Topa prisoner and tortured him along with Cusi Hualpa – initiating the Inca civil war between half-brothers (ff. 80v-83r).

In other words, if we follow the Galvin account, don Pedro pinpointed the pre-Hispanic alliance of Cañari and Inca descendants through Huayna Capac and his kin and followers in the north, the original territory of the Cañari. His literary intervention transcends the more recent colonial Cuzco politics and past by providing temporal depth to the Inca and Cañari relationship. The text does not mention Cañari caciques, such as Chilche, who fought the Inca. The expansive and complex account in the chronicle echoes Purqui's legal strategy in the 1579-1580 *probanza* that supported the pre-Hispanic precedent of Inca nobility and privileges. Significantly, the Inca endorsers of the Galvin Murua belonged to the same kin group of the Inca witnesses in the 1579-1580 *probanza*. However, the chronicle medium provided a more intricate and descriptive conceptualization of Cañari descent and status than the legal formula. As the chapter text continues, the connection to royal Inca genealogy through Guaritito allowed don Pedro to propose that a Cañari leader could wear the pre-Hispanic and colonial Inca marker of nobility and power – the *mascapaycha* or Inca royal tassel.

The *mascapaycha* was a textile object of authority with pre-Hispanic origin used by the Inca. In the colonial period, the royal fringe continued as a symbolic adornment reserved exclusively for Inca descendants, a privilege upheld, if not promoted, by Spanish officials. After the fragmentation of the Inca system, the red tassel held many, often contested, meanings over the course of the sixteenth century (Cummins 1998, 97). Prior to 1572, Spaniards explicitly defined the *mascapaycha* as Atahualpa's crown and linked it with the Iberian concept of the Crown, rulership, and their conquest narrative of a unified geopolitical Inca territory (Estensoro Fuchs 2005). Murua repeatedly translated the *mascapaycha* as 'crown', including Atahualpa's regal appearance when he was captured by Pizarro.²⁵ After Tupac Amaru's execution and Viceroy

²⁴ (They vanquished with skill and at the cost of many, like the valiant and strong Collatopa).

²⁵ 'Y traía en la frente una borla de lana colorada muy finísima, que era la corona e insignia de los reyes Ingas deste Reino' (And he wore on his forehead the multicolored tassel of very fine wool, that was the crown and insignia of the Inca king of this kingdom) (Murua 2004, f. 45r. Also, ff. 50r, 55r, 69r, 103r, 119r, 122r, and 135r).

Toledo's concerted efforts to delegitimize the Inca, the need to represent the sovereign ruler in Atahualpa became irrelevant for Spaniards. The *mascapaycha* shifted to include all the *Sapa* (supreme ruler) Inca as part of royal genealogical succession. Nonetheless, the perpetuation of the tassel's royal significance allowed Inca leaders to negotiate their 'pact' collectively and individually with the Spanish Crown and officials in Peru (Fane 2010, 36; Martínez 2014, 190-192).



Figure 3 – Inca ruler Manco Capac wearing a *mascapaycha* (Murua 2004, f. 9v). Courtesy of Sean Galvin

By the late sixteenth century, the royal tassel served as a vital Indigenous signifier of noble Inca continuity and adaptability by Indigenous artists, descendants, and intellectuals, including Murua's collaborators. The fringe highlighted their royal bloodline according to the custom of primogeniture and, therefore, confirmed their political legitimacy as descendants of pre-Hispanic rulers and nobles (Martínez 2014, 190). The tassel's circulation as an object and discursive symbol allowed Inca elites to convey multiple meanings depending on the context and audience. The performative wearing of the tassel with other elite Inca clothing and paraphernalia in portraits and festivals contributed to an accepted and uncontroversial display of Inca descendants' simultaneous vassalage and elite status in early colonial society, while downplaying their submission (Wuffarden 2005, 232-244). Symbols of prestige included elite textiles and paraphernalia, genealogical trees, portraits, coats of arms, and the *mascapaycha*.²⁶ In the Murua manuscripts the royal tassel is repeatedly associated visually and textually to royal Inca history and descent, including the portraiture of the Inca rulers and their paraphernalia, Inca leaders or 'captains' with Spanish conquistadors and officials, and the fictitious royal Inca coats of arms (see figure 3). The Cañari chapter is one vital and unique intervention.

²⁶ Cummins 1998; Phipps 2004; Estenssoro Fuchs 2005, 93-173; Ramos 2005 and others.

The symbolic significance of the *mascapaycha* in the colonial context crystalized with the establishment of the *alferéz real de los incas* or bearer of the royal standard in 1545 and the formation of the *cabildo* (council) of twenty-four for the election of the *alferéz real de los incas* of the eight native parishes (or *cabildo de los incas*) in 1595. The honorific position of the *alferéz real de los incas*, symbolized by the wearing of the *mascapaycha* during the festival procession of Santiago on 25 July, was established to reward those Inca in Cuzco who had remained loyal to Spaniards. The celebration was held in honor of the apostle's appearance at the conclusion of the Inca uprising led by Manco Inca. The annual election of the *alferéz real de los incas* had become so chaotic and competitive between kinship groups that in 1595 Cuzco's mayor formed an honorific council of Inca descendants from each native parish. Three of the Inca witnesses to the Galvin Murua appear as voting members in 1595 and 1598, which are two of the very few remaining annual election records: don Luis Chalco Yupanqui, don Juan Cusi Quispi, and don Pablo Manco Topa.²⁷ As historian Donato Amado Gonzales' studies show (2008 and 2017), even though membership in the *cabildo* derived from native parish organization, those Inca leaders' validity depended on native kinship and class groupings.

Purqui provided an early precedent for his *ayllu* to assert increasing power in native colonial Cuzco by positioning the Cañari as contenders to the *mascapaycha* in an Inca history. He attempted to secure the privileged social status of the Cañari through two of the most significant determinants in colonial Cuzco – descent from Inca rulers and loyalty to the Spanish crown. Don Pedro's literary intervention in the Galvin Murua created a complex historical discourse for a Cañari man to be the *alferéz real de los incas* that was more difficult through legal avenues. By claiming the privilege to wear the royal tassel, albeit with Inca validation and attitudes of reverence, don Pedro both challenged and associated his Cañari community with Inca exclusivity. His realigned collective memory of conquest negotiated a uniquely powerful position in colonial Cuzco society. Poignantly, he inscribed his community's reformulation into an Inca history for a Spanish audience circa 1590 at the height of internal Inca competition and rancor that led to the formation of the *cabildo de los incas* in 1595. He likely identified an opportunity through the more expansive chronicle medium to introduce the Cañari into the honorific corporation and further solidify their power and prestige in Cuzco.

In fact, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, membership in the *cabildo de los incas* was repeatedly contested by non-Inca inhabitants in Cuzco, particularly the powerful Cañari and Chachapoya from the Santa Ana parish. For instance, in 1600, the low attendance at the annual gathering of the *cabildo de los incas* (likely due to illness) prompted don Pedro Huayna Yupanqui, a non-Inca, to insert his membership and vote. In resistance, Inca descendants, don Luis Chalco Yupanqui and don Pedro Tito Cusiguallpa officially voiced their dissatisfaction, leading to the permanent barring of non-Inca members on 21 October 1600 by the Viceroy of Peru, don Luis de Velasco.²⁸ Decades later, in 1685, don Francisco Uclucana Sabaytocto again gathered a group of Inca descendants, offered them *chicha* (maiz beer) and wine in an unsuccessful attempt to promote himself and his son as the *alferéz real de los incas*. The Inca used the 1600 document in a petition to rebuke don Francisco Uclucana Sabaytocto, who they identified as 'Sahuaytocto indio cañari' (García 1937, 199). According to historian Donato Amado Gonzales, he was descendant and *cacique* of the Chachapoya *ayllu* in the San-

²⁷ 4 June 1595, 24 June 1598, and 29 June 1600 elections records are in Archivo Regional del Cuzco, *Betancur Collection*, vol. 1, no. 25, ff. 288-294. The documents in the Betancur Collection are a copy of original documents.

²⁸ García 1937, 200; Amado Gonzales 2017, 117-120 and 133-134.

ta Ana parish, not a Cañari. However, the assumption by Inca descendants to conflate him as a Cañari leader exposes the dominance of the Cañari *ayllu* (2017, 188-197). In the same decade, the Santa Ana parish, and particularly Francisco Uclucana Sabaytocto, commissioned a famous painting series on native processions during Corpus Christi that linked the Cañari with Inca nobles and Spanish colonial power. One painting captured the might of the Cañari and Chachapoya from the parish of Santa Ana in their procession to the cathedral in Cuzco's main plaza. Their sumptuous attire and banner and central position in front of the cathedral under the gaze of Spanish ecclesiastics and officials asserted their privileged status in Cuzco. The visual narrative of the paintings presented the Cañari as legitimate nobles and bearers for the symbolic office of the *alferéz real de los incas* (Amado Gonzales 2017, 205-210; Dean 1999, 183). Following the long arc of social memory and ethnogenesis, a century earlier don Pedro's literary conceptualization of Cañari ethnic descent and status in colonial Cuzco society justified their intimate relationship with the *mascapaycha* and provided an early validation for non-Inca participation in the *cabildo de los incas* and as bearers of the *alferéz real de los incas*.

Don Pedro's efforts to conceptualize the unique heritage of the Cañari in the late sixteenth century according to Inca and Iberian criteria of nobility becomes even more poignant when considering that in 1616 the Cañari and Chachapoya appear to have had their privileged status threatened. The circumstances prompted the Cañari leadership to successfully petition Viceroy Príncipe de Esquilache to reconfirm and ratify their rights and privileges without requiring personal services. As part of the petition, the *cacique principales* of the Cañaris in Santa Ana parish, which by then did not include don Pedro Purqui, authorized don Juan de la Raya y Cámara to represent them.²⁹ The Galvin chapter clearly served as a complementary venue to legitimate Cañari's potentially precarious position and consistent need to protect and, if possible, promote their status within Cuzco's political and cultural context and history. Indeed, Murua's removal of the chapter for the Getty version underscores the Cañari's insecurity.

The question remains as to exactly why Murua redacted the Cañari chapter and references for the Getty version in the early 1600s. He would have already been aware of the ambivalent position of the Cañari in Cuzco during the Galvin production by living in Cuzco and through his collaborator, Guamán Poma. While working on the Galvin Murua, the Andean artist participated between 1595 and 1600 in an unsuccessful lawsuit against the Cañari and Chachapoya. He claimed traditional land rights in the Huamanga region over the Cañari and Chachapoya. Subsequently, in his own chronicle he repeatedly disparaged them.³⁰ Correspondingly, the accompanying image to the Cañari chapter was left blank. Guamán Poma, who completed the illustrations for this section of the Galvin manuscript (Trentelman 2014; Turner 2014; Ossio 2015), may have left the folio empty to undercut Cañari leadership in the visual narrative (Schoepflin 2022, 146-149). In the Getty Murua, the acute threats to Cañari privileged status in the early 1600s may have prompted Murua to question if the perspectives shared in the chapter were appropriate for an Inca history. Moreover, Murua stated explicitly in the Getty Murua his aim to, 'Dar mayor claridad a esta historia' (Murua 2008, f. 23v).³¹ He avoided confusion for the Spanish reader by adhering more strictly to European standards of a royal history. The friar edited the order of the Inca kings, queens, and captains and streamlined the section that

²⁹ Amado Gonzales 2017, 190; Archivo Regional del Cuzco, Francisco Hurtado, Prot. 113, 1616, 19 August 1616, f. 1135.

³⁰ For the full collection of the lawsuit documents, see Guamán Poma 1991.

³¹ (give greater clarity to this history).

included the Cañari chapter to focus exclusively on Inca customs and governance. In addition to new material on the Mercedarians in Peru and the Inca resistance in Vilcabamba, the friar incorporated substantially new copied text to the life histories of Inca rulers' Tupac Yupanqui and Huayna Capac. Like many other passages in his chronicle, Murua copied textual descriptions of rulers from other chronicle sources, including Cristobal de Molina, a secular priest and advocate for the Inca elite in Cuzco.³² One example explains:

Dizen comúnmente los antiguos desta nación de los cañares que assido siempre traidora - revoltosa, y embustera lleuando y trayendo chismes y que por los muchos que lleuaron sin fundamento, y con él a Huascar ynga de Atao Hualpa los mando matar y hizo en ellos la destrucción que hemos visto y aun ágora tiene las misma costumbre y ordinario en las revueltas y diferencias andan a viua quien vence no teniendo más firmeza que la que descubren los buenos o malos sucessos. (Murua 1616, f. 106r).³³

The passage describes the Cañari as consistently deceitful and unreliable allies in the past and present. The negative representation from Molina's Inca sources introduced, potentially inadvertently, the more negative tenor to the Getty Murua. Finally, Murua aspired to pass royal censorship to receive authorization to publish from the Crown in a political atmosphere of Spanish imperial consolidation. Potentially, don Pedro's literary intervention could no longer be accommodated as a challenge to dominant concepts of the Inca elite, *mascapaycha*, and the idealized projection of a stable colonial Andean social order. Murua likely decided that the Cañari's interventions no longer safely fitted within his goals to present a chronicle focused on Inca history that met the expectations of a Spanish and transatlantic audience and context.

Despite these challenges, don Pedro, as a Cañari leader of *mitmaq* heritage in late sixteenth-century Cuzco, promoted the collective memory and ethnic identity of his community through his literary efforts. From his testimony in the *probanza* to the Galvin Murua, his advocacy and mediation contributed to the Cañari's long, continuous process of ethnogenesis. As a complement to his legal strategies, don Pedro not only infiltrated, but actively participated in the literary adaptation and reformulation of competing and evolving visions of Andean history for a broader Iberian audience through Murua's transatlantic chronicle project. By protecting Inca memory, heritage, and privileges in the face of shared colonial oppression, don Pedro indirectly defended and legitimated the elite rights of his community in the colonial present and future while maintaining important alliances with Inca and Spanish actors. These alliances and strategies by Purqui and his community were not exclusive or singularly opposed to each other. Rather, they existed as part of a composite history in which all the accumulated threads dynamically and iteratively coalesced into their unique and powerful role for the Cañari in Andean society.

³² Though not an unusual early modern practice, scholars have identified multiple uncited sources in Murua's texts (Rowe 1987; Julien 2000; Álvarez-Calderón 2007, and others).

³³ (The elders commonly say of the Cañari nation that they had always been traitors – rebellious and deceitful, spreading and making gossip, and that for many they spread them without reason, with him from Atao Hualpa to Huascar Inca he order them to kill and they made the destruction that we have seen and [they] still now have the same customs and norms in the riots and differences, they live with whoever wins, without having more conviction than that who realizes the good and bad results).

Appendix

Martín de Murua, *Historia del origen* (2004 [1590-1596]), f. 69r.

Capítulo 17, De los famosos hechos de los yndios cañares y de sus privilegios

Trayan estos señores yngas De Hordinario mucha gente de guardia Consigo que era de yndios cañares Por ser velicosos, animossos, valientes y de mucha confiança de quien en la guerra mas se confiauan a manera que el turco con sus genízaros, aunque de quien mas se fiaban de todos en general eran de sus propios naturales y parientes y que estos cañares eran Reservados de tributo y de otra cossa, alguna de los cuales algunos an perseurado en esta gran çiudad Del cuzco y viben en la parrochia de la señora sancta ana el capitán de los cuales es don pedro Purqui y a causa de auer servido muy bien en todo lo que sea ofreçido anssí entre españoles como entre los mismos yndios y estar siempre aparejados como leales Vasallos e Hidalgos para ello. Al presente anssí mismo son reçerbados de tributo y de seruicio personal y de otras muchas ymposiciones. Y Por proviçión de la Real audiencia de la çiudad de los Reyes están declarados y dados por leales y como a tales mandando se les guarden sus privilegios y libertades y dado les por armas una chruz en un escudo de plata que traen tocado y puesto en la cabeza y por ser muy animosos y balientes se les añadieron por ynçinias dos leones a los lados de la cruz. Leuantados y mandando que como a tales Hidalgos, se les guarden sus libetades y privilegios como dicho es. Assí mesmo descendían estos famosos y velicosas cañares de la sangre Real del ynga por un hijo que tubo el gran guayna capac en una yndia de los dichos cañares llamado el famosso capitán guaritito el qual fue muy valiente y para mucho y conquisto muchas tierras e yndios q[ue] estaban alsados contra el ynga su padre y Poniéndolos en mucho Horden y conçierto tHeniendo grandes guerras con el famoso colla topa capitan como queda dicho en su istoria y assí fue permitido A algunos destos dichos cañares poner la uorla y mascapaycha del ynga en la caueça como fuese principal a caueça Por la descendencia que los dichos tubieron de el belicosso capitán guaritito ymfante aunque esto auía de ser con lisençia o mandato Expreso del ynga y al que se la ponía sin ella lo enterrauan viuo y asolauan todo su aylo y parentela y los daba por traydores a la corona Real del ynga y Por caussa de ser desendientes deste valerosso capitán guaritito y d ser tan arduos balientes y animossos en la guerra y gente tan noble tomaron nombre de cañares y como tales descendientes suyos la ayudaron en la conquista de quito y de to[roto] a quel Lacomarca como fuertes y valerosos capitanes quedando siempre en esta Reputación y fama y siendo muy tenidos y estimados y assí lo sono y en día en esta gran ciudad del cuzco y en todo este reyno por fieles y leales vasallos de su mag[esta]d.

(Chapter 17, Of the famous deeds of the Cañari and of their privileges

These Inca lords brought many guards with them who were Cañari Indians because they were brave, courageous, valiant, and very confident. For whom in war they [Cañari] were the most trusted in the manner of the Turkish with their Janissary, although who they [Inca] generally trusted most of all were their own natives and relatives. And these Cañaris were reserved for tribute and other things, some of which some continue today in this great city of Cuzco. And they live in the Parish of Santa Ana. Their captain is don Pedro Purqui. And they were always considered loyal vassals and nobles for having served so well, either among the Spaniards or

the Indians. Today, they are exempt from [paying] tribute and personal service and many other impositions, and by provision of the Real Audiencia of the City of Lima they were declared to be loyal and as such ordered that their privileges and liberties be guarded and given a coat of arms: a cross on a silver shield that they wear with a headdress placed on the head. Because they are very courageous and valiant, they added as symbols two lions to the sides of the cross. They are decreed as nobles with their freedoms and privileges maintained, as it is said. Likewise, these famous and fierce Cañaris descended from the royal blood of the Inca by a son of the great Huayna Capac and an Indian of the Cañari, called the famous Captain Guaritito. He was very brave and for a long time conquered many lands and Indians that had rebelled against the Inca, his father, and putting them into much order and agreement. [He] had many great wars with the famous captain Colla Topa, as was said in their history. It was allowed for some of these Cañaris to put the Inca *borla* [tassel] and *mascapaycha* [royal tassel] of the Inca on their head like the principal leader for the descendancy they had from the valiant captain [and] prince, Guaritito, although had to be with the license or express mandate from the Inca. If they [Cañari] did it without permission, they [Inca] buried him alive and destroyed all his *ayllu* and relatives and labeled them traitors to the royal crown of the Inca. For being the descendants of the valiant capitán Guaritito, and for being so diligent, valiant, spirited in war, and noble people, [others] took Cañari names. As their descendants helped in the conquest of Quito and of [missing] Larcomarca as strong and brave capitans, they [Cañari] always maintained to this day in this great city of Cuzco and throughout this kingdom their reputation and fame for being highly regarded and esteemed as faithful and loyal vassals of his majesty).

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Protecting and Protesting Notarial Exclamations and Declarations (Peru, Chile, Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries)

Aude Argouse
University of Chile (<aargouse@derecho.uchile.cl>)
María Eugenia Albornoz Vásquez
University Bernardo O'Higgins, Chile
(<maujialbornoz@gmail.com>)

Abstract

The second half of the seventeenth century, and the eighteenth century, were characterized by political tensions between Lima, the seat of government of the Viceroyalty, and the Chilean General Captaincy, which was under its jurisdiction. In this context, a Chilean army captain made a statement before a notary in Madrid contradicting previous statements he had made during a judicial interrogation recorded in Lima two years earlier, in which he criticized the Viceroy of Peru. Considering the declaration made in Madrid, this article analyses a legal concept often recorded in notarial documents, called the *exclamación* (exclamation), made by men and women in the jurisdictions of Cuzco and Lima (Peru), and Santiago (Chile), during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Exclamations were used by people seeking to protect themselves against future losses or to prevent the misuse of a previous written statement. Thus, they were official notarial deeds with a judicial purpose. Our hypothesis is that these notarial deeds liberated dominated voices. It allows us to delineate several functions of notarial writing, between justice and conscience. We question how truth and memory may or may not emerge from these documents, considering the location and gendering of protection and protest domination. We argue that the time factor is significant and that subalternity is not an inescapable condition.

Keywords: Power, Protection, Regret, Violence, Will

This text is part of a dossier titled 'Subaltern Writing and Popular Memory in the Early Modern World'. It invites us to consider how the memory of subaltern classes is reconstructed through written documents produced by social actors belonging to dominant groups in colonial societies. We will not only interpret the concept of memory as the act of recording events in writing to avoid forgetting what has occurred among individuals from lower-class backgrounds. We also wish to underscore memory

as the personal endeavor of delving into one's consciousness to contemplate the repercussions of past actions, even if they are relatively recent.

The concept of subalternity has posed challenges for historians of Spanish America who work with notarial archives. Therefore, it is important to say that we have a critical posture in relation to the intellectual trend inspired by the South Asian Subaltern Studies Collective, which emerged in the early 1980s. Many questions have arisen regarding the notarial recording of documents in the Spanish American colonial territories, far from each other and from the metropolis. Some of these questions concern the validity of documents over time, whether they contain accurate speech and the material conditions of writing and memory, which depend on the place and time of writing.

Moreover, a sense of justice emerges from notarial deeds in colonized societies. One possible way of explaining this was proposed by Kathryn Burns, who, while working on *exclamaciones*, stated: 'The *exclamaciones* may have been part of a cautious legal strategy, intended to ensure the preservation of marital property in the event of a future lawsuit. But they could also have served as a legal mechanism to mitigate the abuses of violent husbands' (2005, 64). They may refer to a 'political culture of resistance' developed by certain social groups, for example, women vis-à-vis men or Indians vis-à-vis the Spanish colonial system, which sometimes involved written expression and the office of the notary. The exclamation appears then to be a legal deed that improved the condition of 'subjects under coercion', whether subaltern or dominated, such as the wives mentioned by Burns, in colonial societies of the Ancien Régime.

In this text, we will lay the groundwork for our reflection, which is part of a broader project exploring the existence of certain legal deeds in notary protocols. This project aims to examine the strength of individuals' volition while revealing their sense of justice.¹ We wish to argue that we are in the presence of a practice of self-expression conditioned by a self-examination of conscience due to intimate suffering, possible for any subject of the Catholic king. We adopt this perspective by tracing the history of emotions and acknowledging the significance of emotions in individuals' decision-making. We are interested in exploring the power of guilt, regret and the awareness of having acted under coercion. Indeed, our observations on these voices, first dominated by various constraints and then liberated by the exclamation before the notary, allow us to argue that it was possible to restore legal vigour to speech that had been suspended or altered. Hence, the time factor associated with this form of protest contrasts with the very condition of an inescapable subalternity.

After introducing our working hypothesis regarding notarial protocols, we will present the corpus of *exclamaciones* in the notarial archives of Cuzco and Santiago de Chile that attracted our attention. This will help us highlight the continuity of this practice over time and across colonial territories. We will then propose a classification of the *exclamaciones* encountered

¹ This work is part of research on *exclamaciones* and *declaraciones*, based on the archives of Hispanic-American notaries, and follows a dual approach: a) cultural history of social relations and judicial instruments for resolving conflicts, supported by written culture, the history of speech and the history of feeling and emotions (Albornoz Vásquez 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015 and 2016a, 2016b) and b) socio-cultural history of justice from a gender perspective (Albornoz Vásquez 2007a, 2007b, 2020 and 2022). We would like to extend our sincere thanks to Kathryn Burns for sharing her field notes, to Andrea Sanzana Saez who, with the consistency and seriousness that characterizes her work, facilitated our access to primary sources in Chile, and to Marianne González Le Saux for her careful reading and good suggestions. This study has been undertaken as part of the research project 'Vox Populi. Spaces, Practices and Strategies of Visibility of Marginal Writing in the Early Modern and Modern Periods' (PID2019-107881GB-I00AEI/10.13039/501100011033), financed by the Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades and the Agencia Estatal de Investigación, Gobierno de España.

thus far, based on the constraints placed on the declarants. Finally, in the last section, we will conclude by examining the moral constraint weighing on the declarants, which emerges in the notarial acts.

1. *Subalterns and Ventriloquists*

One of the main concerns of subaltern studies has been whether the dominated, particularly the poor, can write their own history. A complementary orientation has emerged, in which scholars have studied marginal groups and the processes of marginalization (Guglielmi 1986). Thus, the first step of the subaltern studies involved the provincialization or decentralization of Europe and recognition that its categories were not universal. In the second stage, the focus shifted towards ‘restoring dignity to the forms of transmission of historical knowledge that existed outside Europe before the colonialism of the nineteenth century erased or suppressed them while educating indigenous elites according to Western educational models’ (Marcocci 2016, 10).

It is partly in their relationship to writing, and to the conditions of access to registers, that several groups have been identified as subaltern. From this perspective, subalterns who express themselves in written documents have been considered ventriloquized. This seems particularly relevant for historical studies undertaken with notarial sources produced in the Andes, where the subaltern groups (the indigenous Indians) did not speak Spanish, the language of judicial and notarial records in the Spanish colonies of the Viceroyalty of Peru, and did not have a mastery of writing (Burns 2010; Guerrero 2010). This idea of the notary as ventriloquist questions the possibility of recognizing these declarants as social agents capable of seizing writing and language to tell their own story.

Thus, the disciplinary focus of ‘Latin Americanism’ has largely centered on ‘studies on problems of hegemonic formation, ideology, cultural politics, social identities and symbolic economy’ (Moraña and Sánchez Prado 2012, 11),² while often neglecting what Sara Ahmed (2004) refers to as ‘the cultural politics of emotion’, despite there being numerous publications on this subject. In contrast, studies on Christianized North American Indians have been noted for their bicultural nature and the inclusion of autobiography in traditional native cultures (Wyss 2000).

In an Ancien Régime colonial context, such as Spanish America, the presence of subaltern groups can be explained by two enmeshed social hierarchies: imperial, where Spaniards from the Metropole were above all Creoles; and local, where notables and important landowners, generally Spaniards or descendants of Spaniards, were mostly mestizos, Indians and people of African descent. Therefore, being poor is not related to a lack of money or wealth, but to reputation (credit). And having credibility depends on the circumstances and the location, so that the same person may be considered as poor in one town and not poor in another (Albornoz Vásquez 2014). Furthermore, from a gender perspective, women are also a subordinate group to men. When considering these three categories of subaltern groups in Hispanic-Catholic America, the most ‘subaltern’ of all would be black slave women, who were deprived of the possibility to express themselves.

How then can the voices of subalterns be recovered in circumstances where they were constantly coerced and forced into categories, particularly legal ones, that were imposed upon them? To what extent can the public, legal and formalist writing that constitutes much of the documen-

² Unless otherwise stated, all translations are the authors’.

tation used by historians record these voices in the context of the Spanish Catholic monarchy? These questions lead to a reexamination of the role of writing officers, especially notaries, in the transmission of knowledge from subaltern, dominated and marginal groups (Herzog 2010).

In addition to the mechanisms of submission to authority in this monarchical and Catholic society, we should examine the willpower of the actors of the past to validate their declarations before the king's notaries. Rather than studying the capacity of subalterns to be social agents or their agency, in this text we aim to examine the conditions that made it possible for writing officers, who were charged with public writing, to record the expression of emotions and feelings unique to the individuals who declared them (Argouse 2016b). We believe that the question of subalternity cannot be studied by separating social groups according to categories unfamiliar to the societies being considered. Instead, the concrete conditions of access to writing, that allow them to be able to speak for themselves before the authorities, should be pondered; for example, clamouring for consolation for their suffering before jurisdictional authorities (Albornoz Vásquez 2012) or establishing their choices and defending their interests before notaries (Albornoz Vásquez and Argouse 2017). From this perspective, a particular power relationship appeared when the document was being written. This power relationship was determined by the social and cultural backgrounds of the time. This is why some social historians have described notaries as brokers (Nussdorfer 2009).

Considered as assistants to justice, most notaries were laymen, often urban, who had links with rather dominant groups, i.e., property-owning groups. Thus, a classical and anachronistic approach, reflected in most of the cataloguing efforts available in the archives and which relate to property rights and their transmission, suggests that notaries were essentially at the service of landlords eager to protect their property from the onslaught of other social groups, and that what they wrote reflected the concerns of the wealthy. However, a complete reading of notarial archives, such as the one proposed by French historian and notary Jean-Paul Poisson, shows that the notary could also be seen as a figure who was available to everyone (Clanchy 1979; Beal 1998; Bertrand 2015). In other words, at first glance, nothing predetermined that the notaries of Hispanic America were at the service of one social group rather than another; hence, it seems necessary to ask what, in the notary's office, would predispose him to record the voices of dominant classes to the detriment of subaltern voices. Indeed, as a counterargument, there are often significant proportions of women's wills in colonial archives, as well as those of Indians (Kordić Riquelme and Goić 2005; Pizzigoni 2007; Argouse 2016a). Therefore, the notary's records consist of a collection of words and meanings going beyond statements of principle.

In this text, we will explore what happened to individuals who lived in or passed through various places within the jurisdiction of the Viceroyalty of Peru during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Two examples should illustrate our point, showing that the notary's register could accommodate the speech of those usually considered to be dominated and subject to social, economic and legal constraints. In Cajamarca, Peru, in the seventeenth century, an Indian woman, Juana Lachos, made her will and declared in a clause that her grandson, whose name was Domingo de la Cruz, never visited her.³ Through this act, the testator left a trace of this man's family bond with an Indian woman, and although he had a Spanish name, his blood purity could be questioned. It also means that the declarant made use of the space of the clause to express what seemed to her to be an important truth. At the same time, this Indian woman implicitly recognized the validity of the notary's register to establish this truth.

³ Archivo Regional de Cajamarca, Escribano Pascual Culquirayco, Legajo 41, 27 de julio de 1693, 566.

Sometimes, writing also captures a fleeting moment when an individual was able to express themselves and alter their destiny, thanks to the revelation of new or previously undisclosed information. For instance, in 1650, a recently purchased slave who was about to board a ship in Valparaiso informed the buyer's agent that the fistulas he had were 'old'. This information about the slave altered the characteristics of the item being purchased because the prior illness impacted its value. This revelation from the slave was duly documented by a clerk, potentially leading to the annulment of the sale on the grounds of non-conforming merchandise, thereby preventing the slave from being transported to Lima.⁴

These two cases suggest the possibility that the notarial authority could be a means for subalterns, such as slaves, foreigners, women and Indians, to express themselves. They declared something *para que conste* (for the record), which would be recorded in writing. At the margin of what was expected in a will or a power of attorney, the expression of oneself, one's situation, and one's suffering seemed to be possible. In short, we can infer that this Indian woman and this slave knew that the witness and the register could be used to convey their message in writing.

Another case allows us to consider the condition of the subaltern as that of any person who has been coerced by force, and to demonstrate that subalternity would not then be an intrinsic absence of speech but the distortion of its expression by violence.

This is what occurred in Lima, the capital of the Viceroyalty of Peru, in a tavern during the early afternoon of a day in November 1671.⁵ Cristobal Gaona had just had a difficult time with the viceroy's secretary, Phelipe Romanes, who gave him some paper and ordered him to write a statement about the actions of the captain general of Chile, Juan Henríquez. Viceroy Conde de Lemos was rather worried about the way the captaincy was being administered. He had received very negative information that could also harm his reputation. It was not only Henríquez who had bad press but the whole of Chile, which was perceived as a realm of depravity and abuse, which its captain general was unable to put behind him, especially following the scandals that had erupted during the mandate of Captain General Francisco de Meneses in the previous decade (Argouse 2013). It must be said that Henríquez was involved in affairs that reached the viceroy's ears and would be catastrophic for everyone if they also reached the king's, without discernment or the necessary context.

Cristobal Gaona, a native of Cordoba, Spain, and a captain in the Chilean army for more than sixteen years, was on his way to Spain when he was disembarked in the early hours of the morning from the ship on which he intended to travel to Coro, in the jurisdiction of Caracas. Forced into the viceroy's palace, he was obliged to declare what he knew about Henríquez, or rather against Henríquez. The Conde de Lemos probably did not trust this individual any more than the captain general and therefore demanded this statement in writing, which would allow him to be safe if the rumours of the scandals in Chile reached Madrid. Gaona complied and was even obliged to sign a deed modified by the viceroy as part of a judicial investigation against Henríquez.

Two years later, in May 1673, in Madrid, Cristobal Gaona appeared before Juan Burgos, one of the most famous notaries in the city. He came to make a declaration to deny everything he had written in Lima two years earlier. He explained that he had been forced to declare against Juan Henríquez, not being in a position to contradict what the viceroy seemed to want to hear to save his own honour by smearing Henríquez. Thus, a man, a military man who

⁴ Archivo Nacional Histórico de Chile, Escribanos de Santiago, vol. 298, 5.

⁵ Archivo Histórico de Protócolos de Madrid, Protocolo 8173, 331-373. We have mentioned this case previously (Argouse 2016c).

had risen to the rank of captain, who could write and who could reply to the viceroy 'de voz y de habla crítica' (with full voice and critical speech), found himself under duress, forced to declare and sign a document against his will. For his part, the viceroy feared that the clamour and hunger of the desperate soldiers would lead to his downfall and so he gave in to the need to open legal proceedings to inform the public about what was happening in Chile. But let us leave the turpitude of these gentlemen, which is quite symptomatic of the moral crisis of the seventeenth century.

The act by Gaona in Madrid, recorded as a 'declaration', raises several questions about the strength of the word given and authenticated before a notary, especially in a space as large as the Catholic monarchy was between the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Declarations are expressions of volition that can be revoked. Revocation is a mechanism often used, for example, for wills or powers of attorney. This revocability raises the question of their legal value in time and space, between jurisdictions. Moreover, how can one know whether a grantor has not contradicted himself between two deeds, one drawn up in Lima, the other in Santiago, for example? Small arrangements are possible, as shown by the practice of wills or powers of attorney. When two wills by the same person can be compared, the rule is simple: the most recent one prevails.

However, Gaona's act in Madrid corresponds to something other than an intention to repeat, or to note changes in the establishment of debts or properties. It expresses a willingness to disavow what was said in Lima because the Lima declaration was made under duress. Thus, Gaona's declaration made in Madrid shows the limits of the idea of a firm will, of the 'good will' of a subject who desires something and whose own intentions preside over the writing, whether by his own hand or by having recourse to a notary. For a long time, this approach has guided historiographical readings of notarial acts in the Spanish-Catholic world. Gaona indicates that things may have been different in Madrid to how they were in Lima, and that the will may be altered yet remain valid, not according to the subject but to the circumstances. As Kathryn Burns points out in relation to the confessions of the accused:

The wishes and intentions that influenced the statements and confessions of the convicts, for example, were largely those of the plaintiffs in the cases (and/or the judges, barristers, and solicitors). When the defendants were examined, they proceeded according to the tenor of the case, asking them questions according to the accusations that the plaintiffs (and/or judges, barristers, and solicitors) had made against them. The very structure of criminal justice privileged the wishes and intentions of the plaintiffs and their representatives far more than those of the defendants. The attribution of agency would have to be done, as far as possible, within an interpretative context enriched by other documents, other indices of the subjects' local strength, wealth and power. (Burns 2005, 64-65).

From a methodological perspective, this implies that notaries can no longer be viewed as a homogeneous social group serving only the wealthy. Nor were declarants a homogeneous social group, as they included prisoners, women, widows, Indians, the poor, the rich and inhabitants of both urban and rural areas. In summary, the two examples, namely the captain who travels between Santiago, Lima and Madrid with the desire to share his truth, and the situation of prisoners facing considerable pressure, which was permissible in the judicial practices of the Ancien Régime, highlight the vulnerability of those willing to testify. This vulnerability appears to be the primary constraint preventing them from testifying calmly. Thus, in Ancien Régime societies, the relationship to legal writing, specifically in the notaries' offices as spaces that had to be accessible to all subjects (guaranteed by the king), shaped the relationships between people because it lay at the heart of power dynamics (Beal 1998; Petrucci 1999; Castillo Gómez 2006).

2. Exclamations and Protests

In the notarial archives of Peru and Chile, we can find a type of deed that corresponds to the one made by Gaona in Madrid: the exclamations (*exclamaciones*). In her field notes on the Peruvian archives, Kathryn Burns (2003) indicates that a preliminary examination establishes that this was a retraction, or more precisely, a precaution taken to nullify an earlier act. A typical exclamation protested against the violence of a husband who had threatened his wife to sign, along with him, some instrument (obligation letter, sale, etc.). This is the meaning of what Gaona did in Madrid: his declaration shows how much he protested about the coercive circumstances in which he had been forced to make and sign his declaration against Henríquez. The difference is that Gaona made the first act in the context of a legal proceeding, while the exclamations identified by Burns are more in the context of contractual situations and joint legal action leading to wonder ‘How many of the hundreds of other contracts one has just read might have been the result of coercion? When it comes to interpreting women’s will, can we take the notarial records at their word?’ (Burns 2003, 152).

In Madrid, we searched through various records of the notary Juan de Burgos for similar deeds. No exclamation was uncovered. The archivists at the Archivo Histórico de Protocolos in Madrid confirmed that they have never seen this type of document. It does not appear in the catalogues either. However, the typology of notarial acts for the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is extremely varied, so the repertoires of actions of the declarants seem infinite (González García and Fernández 2021). We studied the notes of specialists, including Alejandro Martín Ortega, but we have not found a similar document thus far.⁶

To date, our main corpus is based on the examination of 94 volumes of the Escribanos de Santiago de Chile (Notary Public of Santiago de Chile), which has allowed us to detect almost a hundred *exclamaciones* (93) for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, overlapping a little with the early nineteenth century (1636-1807). We also consulted a volume by a notary from Lima, Antonio de Bahamonde, who practiced in Santiago between 1671 and 1675. For Central America, Juan José Falla indicates some similar deeds for the seventeenth century (between 1624 and 1693).⁷ We have supplemented this corpus with around forty *exclamaciones* from the archives of the Biblioteca Nacional de Lima regarding the jurisdiction of Cuzco, dating between 1565 and 1833. Kathryn Burns kindly shared her notes with us, as well as personal reflections and complete transcriptions of these exclamations.

As part of a research project on everyday legal life, Sergio Martínez Baeza conducted a systematic study of Chilean notarial archives and examined the notarial documents of the city of Santiago for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He identified 37 *exclamaciones* written between 1600 and 1800 out of a total of almost 4,000 notarial acts preserved in 200 volumes, which constitute 20% of a collection of around a thousand volumes that make up the Escribanos de Santiago fonds (Martínez Baeza 1980).⁸ It should be noted that the collections of Escribanos and Notarios at the Archivo Nacional Histórico de Chile are composed of volumes that were bound in the nineteenth century. This act of collection has, in many cases, altered the bundles created by the notaries.⁹ As a result, the size of notarial protocols may vary and contain writings spanning from six months to several years, and there may also be gaps caused by lost or destroyed folios.

⁶ Archivo Histórico de Protocolos de Madrid 1990-1991.

⁷ Falla 1994-2007.

⁸ For now, we have not been able to verify whether these 37 exclamations are in the 94 volumes that we analysed because unfortunately, in his article, the author only refers to five out of the 37 documents.

⁹ On the disappearance of the notarial protocol archives in Santiago, see Argouse (2022).

The appearance of *exclamaciones* in notarial archives raises questions. Sergio Martínez Baeza claims to have encountered them in Santiago de Chile in the second half of the eighteenth century. However, in the Viceroyalty of Peru, exclamations are mentioned as early as the sixteenth century, as demonstrated by Kathryn Burns' work on Cuzco. The same is true for the General Captaincy of Chile. On 14 November 1565, Martín de Herrera states in a waiver (*carta de apartamiento*), 'Declaro que contra lo [que, testado] en este perdón no tengo hecha exclamación pública ni secreta e si pareciere en algund tiempo, que no me valga ... y si pareciere en algund tiempo que tengo hecha la dicha exclamación, que non valga en juicio ni fuera del el...' (Jara and Mellafe 1996, 462).¹⁰ Moreover, we find this same formula, 'no tengo hecha exclamación pública ni secreta', in two notarized sales made in Moquegua in 1637 and 1642 (Cubillos and Muñoz 2014, 11-18).¹¹

The question of declarants is equally interesting to us. Burns states, 'Of the forty cases we have found, half were granted by married women who exclaimed against deeds that had been forced upon them to sign against their will' (2005, 64). However, the situation is somewhat different in Santiago, as much more than half of the 41 women who made exclamations, about 30, were married. Of these 41 women, around 20 did not know how to sign, which was not the case for men. Only two out of forty-six individual male declarants did not know how to sign.

To elaborate on our Santiago corpus, we have followed the findings and indications of Martínez Baeza, who specifies that the exclamations correspond to *protestas* or *protestaciones*. In fact, among the 93 Santiago acts, four *exclamaciones* are also indicated by the notaries as *protestas* (between 1722 and 1795), while five are only qualified as *protestas* but their wording is identical to *exclamaciones* (towards the end of the eighteenth century).

In addition, the *Diccionario general del notariado de España y ultramar* by José Gonzalo de las Casas, published in Madrid in 1857, offers a definition under the entry *protesta*, which also corresponds to the *exclamaciones* we have found and which we will retain here:

La declaración que se hace para adquirir o conservar algún derecho o precaver algún daño que pueda sobrevenir. La protesta es declaratoria, prohibitoria o inhibitoria, invitatoria o monitoria y certificatoria. La primera es una declaración de la voluntad del que protesta, la segunda, aquella en que se prohíbe la ejecución de alguna cosa, la tercera la en que se incita o estimula para que se haga, y la cuarta, aquella por la cual uno se cerciora de estar o no hecha cierta cosa. El remedio de la protesta se ha establecido principalmente para cuando uno hace contra su voluntad alguna cosa, o que se ejecuta con gran perjuicio suyo, y que no puede impedir por el miedo, la opresión o el respeto reverencial (de las Casas 1857, 312).¹²

¹⁰ (I declare that I have not publicly or secretly made any exclamation against what is stated in this pardon, and if it appears at any time that my exclamation is valid, it shall not be considered in court or outside of it).

¹¹ (I have not made any public or secret exclamation). In Lima, Beatriz Rodríguez de Avendaño, a resident of Lima, exclaims against her husband Cosme Milanés, who obligates her to pay his debts and mistreats her (Catálogo de Protocolos Notariales 2021, 20, 3 diciembre 1591, 86v-87v) and Diego de Castro, resident of Lima, exclaims against Francisco de Saldaña, regarding a lawsuit they were pursuing (Catálogo Protocolos Notariales 2021, 445, 31 diciembre 1599, 665v-666v).

¹² (The statement made to acquire or preserve a right or prevent any damage that may occur. The protest can be declarative, prohibitive or inhibitory, inviting or monitorial, and certificatory. The first is a statement of the protester's will, the second is the one in which the execution of something is prohibited, the third is the one in which one is urged or stimulated to do something, and the fourth is the one in which one verifies whether something has been done or not. The remedy of protest has been established primarily for when something is done against one's will, or when something is executed to one's great detriment and cannot be prevented due to fear, oppression or reverential respect).

This definition is followed by practical guidance on how to draft an *escritura de protesta* against a contract, which resembles an exclamation. This indicates that an *exclamación* would be well-suited to a contractual setting, whereas a declaration, such as Gaona's in Madrid, would be the term used in a procedural setting. As previously stated, one of the questions that guided this study was to establish whether the documents were written by people who could be categorized as 'subalterns'. However, this category poses a problem as it erases the plural and varied nature of the population in the cities of the Viceroyalty of Peru and does not consider the question of the concrete access to public writing and legal tools by the subjects of the Hispanic-Catholic monarchy. In fact, in the Spanish-Catholic Ancien Régime, subaltern groups were caught up in relationships of domination, domesticity or service, in such a way that they were always dependent on those who governed them, even when they rebelled or resisted this subordination.

The concept of subalternity, as used by the social sciences, defines the fixed position of certain social sectors within oppressive power relations. Subalternity thus refers to the condition of inequality in the imposition of hegemonic ideas and defines a particular form of appropriation of these dominant values under conditions of imbalance. This term is therefore quite problematic as it carries a contradiction since subalterns were originally defined as deprived of a voice of their own or the possibility of conveying their intentions.

If we consider the notary's office solely as a tool of European hegemony in colonized territories, in line with Ángel Rama's book (2004), an approach that has been widely contested in recent years (Jouve Martín 2005; Rappaport and Cummins 2011; Brewer-García 2020), we cannot consider notarial deeds to be acts of speech that allow subaltern voices to be 'heard'. According to this interpretation, notarial records can only reveal dominated voices, crushed by coercion and violence, as we shall see below.

Our attention was therefore drawn to the circumstances of this deprivation of voice and the possibility of distinguishing, in the 'subaltern' condition, a criterion linked to the moment of expression of the power relationship. In other words, it is a question of behaviour situated in time and marked by a categorical imperative. A characteristic shared by all the declarants in our corpus, in Santiago as well as in Cuzco or in Guatemala and Lima, is that these people find themselves, at least momentarily, in a situation where their will, supposedly validating a previous act, has been dominated by coercion, by something that imposes itself on them and which they cannot resist. They have abdicated their power of decision to another person who enjoys, in the circumstances, a superior *potestas*, i.e., an authority that is difficult to contest or to resist since it is, on this occasion, a vector of force and violence.

In their exclamations people affirm that they have been forced by an external will, and their voice has been crushed by the constraint. However, it seems to us that for this constraint to be exercised, it must first be recognized as obligatory, and that it is a 'Technology of Will that requires a willing submission, a willingness to be under the moral law, an act of volition that is explicitly narrated (and justified) as an act of volition' (Ahmed 2014, 92-93). This could also be the meaning of the famous common saying throughout Hispanic-Catholic America, 'se acata pero no se cumple' (it is accepted but not fulfilled). This principle advocates the recognition by all subjects of the authority of the king while preserving the possibility for each jurisdiction to make the necessary adjustments.

The *protestas* and *exclamaciones* are part of a legal mechanism that guarantees the will of everyone, despite the constraints they may have suffered. Subalternity (absence of a voice/speech) therefore does not depend exclusively on class, gender, race, economic conditions or the condition of slavery, but rather on being subject to pressures, fears and threats arising from violence. This could happen to any inhabitant of Catholic Spanish America.

3. *The Binding Force of Duty*

The mandatory nature of duty gives rise to the fear of disobedience, and thus of failing to fulfil the command and the burden of expectation. In our research, we grouped protest situations under three types of cases in which the power of the one who obliges and makes people fear something is displayed: a domestic relationship, such as the husband over his wife, the father or mother over the child; threats exerted by a public or religious authority; and social or economic pressure.

Among the exclamations transcribed by Kathryn Burns, that of Doña Catalina Osorio de Villagra in 1650 is quite symptomatic of the effects of the husband's power over his wife in a city like Cuzco. Noting that her husband, Don Francisco de Figueroa, had left for Lima, she makes an exclamation denouncing his spendthrift behaviour and the fear that when he returns, he will again force her into debt with various people. Catalina describes the form that the threats take: 'me ha puesto las manos en muchas ocasiones y será posible usar de estos rigores para que yo venga a hacer lo que se me pidiere de temor del susodicho y que no me maltrate'.¹³ What compels her to obey is undoubtedly the fear of being hit, but also the fear of failing in her duty to obey:

porque no las ejecute y por ser mi marido a quien debo tener todo respeto será posible que otorgue con él las dichas escrituras o vender los dichos mis bienes y para que en caso que las hiciere o cualquiera de ellas vendiendo o obligándome juntamente con el suso dicho conste en todo tiempo que le he de hacer contra toda mi voluntad y por ser forzada oprimida y atemorizada para cualquiera de las dichas escrituras.¹⁴

The expression is repeated at the end of the deed:

otorgo por ante el presente escribano infra escrito que desde luego para cuando sucediere otorgar las dichas escrituras obligándome o vendiendo o en otra manera protesto reclamo exclamo de las dichas escrituras una dos y tres veces y las que el derecho me permite para que no me pare perjuicio ninguno ni valga ni haga fee en juicio ni fuera de él por cuanto las he de hacer y otorgar contra mi voluntad, oprimida forzada y atraída para ello por las dichas amenazas y malos tratamientos que de ordinario me hace el dicho Don Francisco de Figueroa mi marido así de obras como de palabra y no de mi libre voluntad.¹⁵

Thus, unable to imagine disobeying, she fears the consequences of going before a notary. Then 'para no me pase ningún perjuicio ni a mis herederos y quede pobre y sin los dichos mis bienes no he hallado otro remedio más de hacer protesta y exclamación'.¹⁶

¹³ (He has put his hands on me on many occasions and it may be possible to use these harsh measures to make me do what is asked of me out of fear of the aforementioned person and to avoid mistreatment).

¹⁴ Archivo Regional de Cusco, Notarios, Lorenzo Messa Andueza, Protocolo 177, 1650, 1508v-1509v (Because I dit not execute them and because he is my husband, to whom I owe all respect, it may be possible that I agree with him to sign the said deeds or to sell my property. And in case I sign them, or sell or oblige myself together with the aforementioned, it should be stated that I did so against my will and because I was forced, oppressed, and intimidated to sign these deeds).

¹⁵ Archivo Regional de Cusco, Notarios, Lorenzo Messa Andueza, Protocolo 177, 1650, 1508v-1509v (I grant before the present notary, undersigned, that henceforth, whenever I am compelled to execute the said documents, whether by obligating myself, selling, or otherwise, I protest, claim, and challenge the said documents once, twice, and three times, and as many times as the law allows, so that they may not cause me any harm or be valid or have any effect in court or outside it, since I am doing so against my will, being oppressed, forced, and coerced into it by the threats and ill-treatment that Don Francisco de Figueroa, my husband, regularly inflicts upon me, both in actions and words, and not of my free will).

¹⁶ Archivo Regional de Cusco, Notarios, Lorenzo Messa Andueza, Protocolo 177, 1650, 1508v-1509v (So that I or my heirs do not suffer any harm and I would do end up poor and without my said assets, I have found no other remedy but to make a protest and outcry).

Here, the reference to the memory of the violence suffered is quite explicit, and the exclamation serves rather to record facts that could affect future acts carried out under duress, without reference to a deed that was previously written. This is also the case in the village of Urubamba, on 5 March 1616, where Doña Bernarda de Cabrera, legitimate wife of Pedro de Ecos Ojeda, made an exclamation before the notary Francisco Hurtado. Her husband wanted to force her to sell her dowry lands. Bernarda de Cabrera did not want to, 'por ser pobre y cargada de hijos no quiere vender las dhas posesiones'.¹⁷ So her husband hit her, as she describes it:

El dicho mi marido me ha amenazado y me ha tratado mal de obra y palabra en presencia de los dichos testigos y me amenazó que si no otorgaba la dicha carta de venta me había de maltratar y darme mala vida y que si no estuvieran los que estaban presentes hiciera un disparate que a el y a ella les pesará / yo temiéndome de que el dicho mi marido no me haga alguna demasía habrá de conceder lo que el dicho mi marido me pide lo cual hago forzada y contra mi voluntad y desde ahora digo y reclamo y protesto que lo hago forzada y contra toda mi voluntad y que lo he de pedir en el tiempo que pudiere ante las justicias de su majestad y ante quien con derecho pueda y deba y a los presentes testigos pido y les ruego tengan muy en la memoria lo que entre mi y el dicho mi marido pasó para que en tiempo que fuere necesario lo juren y declaren y por no haber [431v.] al presente escribano ni justicia en este dicho pueblo ante quien otorgar esta dicha exclamación ruego y pido lo firmen de sus nombres para que haga fe en juicio y fuera del y porque no se escribir ruego y pido d[unreadable] a los dichos testigos lo firmen por mi siendo a todo presentes.¹⁸

She then went to Cuzco to ensure that it was properly registered. The deed was recorded in a notary's office on 23 March of the same year. Before the notary Juan Rodríguez de Cellorigo, the dispossessed woman repeated her exclamation to protect herself from the commitments that her submission to her husband would force her to make against her will.

In 1646, the authority of a father over his son could also be invoked as grounds for compulsion that would annul all acts made by a minor child. Thus, again in Cuzco, Don Francisco de Loaysa Centeno protested any deed that his father could have made him do, 'por ser como es menor de edad y estar debajo de dominio paternal'.¹⁹

In 1717, in Santiago de Chile, the Comisario General Don Pedro de Pardo y Carrera protested a declaration and bond that his father had asked him to make in his favor, but which was contrary to Don Pedro's interests. During the hearing, an altercation occurred between the father and son, as the son protests his father's will. The son argues:

¹⁷ Archivo Regional de Cusco, Notarios, Francisco Hurtado, Protocolo 115, 1616, 431v (because she is poor and has many children, she does not want to sell her possessions).

¹⁸ *Ibid* (My husband has threatened me and mistreated me both physically and verbally in the presence of the aforementioned witnesses. He threatened that if I did not sign the said deed of sale, he would mistreat me and make my life miserable. And if the witnesses who were present were not there, he would have done something that would have affected both him and her. Fearing that my husband might commit some excess against me, I have decided to concede to what he asks of me, which I do out of force and against my will. From now on, I state, claim, and protest that I am acting under duress and against my entire will, and that I will seek justice at the time I am able, before the courts of his Majesty and before any authority who can and should hear me. I request and urge the present witnesses to keep in mind what happened between my husband and me, so that they may swear and declare it when necessary. Since there is no notary or justice in this town before whom to make this declaration, I request and ask that they sign with their names so that it may be recognized in court and elsewhere. And because I cannot write, I request and ask that the aforementioned witnesses sign on my behalf, being fully present).

¹⁹ Archivo Regional de Cusco, Notarios, Alonso Beltrán Lucero, Protocolo 10, 1646, 5-5v (Being a minor and under paternal rule).

que usando de la patria potestad sin más razón que la de mandar como su padre le hizo venir en el otorgamiento del dicho resguardo y por el respeto reverencial y obediencia que es notoria que siempre ha tenido por no llegar al caso de faltarle al respeto y obediencia vino en ello y no obstante al tiempo de otorgarle expresó la fuerza y violencia que el dicho su padre hacia en presencia del capitán Lorenzo Zumita [?] que escribió la dicha declaración y resguardo y de mi el presente escribano, y habiendo le propuesto que no le otorgase respondió que estando como estábamos en el cuarto que sirve de estudio o recibimiento del dicho su padre no podía menos que otorgarle por no faltarle a su respeto y por otras precisas obligaciones que le movían.²⁰

In other cases, we find a similar situation with a mother and her son. Two situations that occurred in Santiago de Chile in the second half of the eighteenth century show the pressure that two adult, literate men experienced from their mothers. In 1764, Don Antonio Carlos de Morales, who worked as a public *escribano* in the city of Concepción, protested the sale of a child slave that he had just made before the *escribano de cámara* of the Real Audiencia of Santiago because, he says:

lo firmó, y condescendió a el contra toda su voluntad por serle en sumo perjuicio y que solo lo hiso; y efectuó, por el respecto reverencial de su madre, quién hallándose, en suma, y lamentable, inopia, sin tener mas bienes, ni congrua alguna para su manutención, y Su entierro (que dicho mulatillo,) y tan solo al abrigo de el otorgante quién con la cortedad de sus bienes mantiene una numerosa familia de mujer e hijos, se ha despojado de dicho mulatillo, perjudicándose el otorgante.²¹

In 1777, Friar Thadeo de Herrera y Rojas, a novice, presented an exclamation to invalidate the renunciation of assets that he had just made in favour of his mother and emphasized the displeasure that he feared would be provoked if he did not obey her.

pareció el hermano Fray Thadeo de Herrera y Roxas religioso novicio; y dijo que por cuanto hoy día de la fecha acaba de hacer y otorgar su renuncia para efecto de profesar en su sagrada religión y por ante don Joseph Rubio escribano público y de cabildo des esta ciudad y por que la citada renuncia la hizo a contemplación de doña Mercedes Roxas su madre y por no disgustarla contra la voluntad del otorgante por la razón dicha y no darle disgusto, en cuyo instrumento de renuncia citado dejaba a dicha su madre todo cuanto le tocaba por herencia y futuras subvenciones a excepción de quinientos pesos que reservaba para libros. Por tanto, y siendo como dicho es hecha dicha citada renuncia contra su deliberada voluntad usando de la facultad que el derecho le permite exclama y reclama de la dicha renuncia, una, dos, y tres veces y tantas cuantas el derecho le permite para que no valga ni haga fe en juicio ni fuera de él, y quiere que en cuanto a que sus bienes temporales y futuras sucesiones que le puedan tocar y pertenecer se los deja a su hermana doña María del Carmen Herrera y Roxas para que los lleve para si en virtud de este instrumento los herede y goce a excepción de los quinientos pesos que siempre reserva para si y para libros por ser esta su última y deliberada voluntad.²²

²⁰ Archivo Nacional Histórico de Chile, Escribanos de Santiago, vol. 509, 1717, 354v-355v (Using parental authority, without any reason other than to command, as his father made him come to grant the said certificate, and due to the reverential respect and obedience that he has always had for him, he complied to avoid disrespecting him and disobeying him. Despite this, at the time of granting it, he expressed the force and violence that his father exerted in the presence of Captain Lorenzo Zumita, who wrote the said declaration and certificate, and of myself, the present scribe, and the receipt of the said from his father. Having proposed that he could do nothing but grant it, he responded that he did so out of respect and to avoid failing his duties, despite the situation).

²¹ Archivo Nacional Histórico de Chile, Escribanos de Santiago, vol. 773, 1764, 63-63v (He signed it and consented to it against his own will, as it was extremely detrimental to him, and he did it only because of the reverential respect he had for his mother, who, being in extreme and lamentable poverty, without any other assets or sufficient means for her maintenance and burial [which the said mulatto was left with], and only under the protection of the grantor, who, with the limited means of his own, supports a large family of wife and children, has been deprived of said mulatto, thereby harming the declarant).

²² Archivo Nacional Histórico de Chile, Escribanos de Santiago, vol. 786, 1777, 457-457v (Brother Fray Thadeo de Herrera y Roxas, a novice religious, appeared and stated that today, on the date mentioned, he has made

The exclamations make it possible to discover individuals who were forced to accept compromises or commitments because they had to obey a public or religious authority. Thus, in 1731, in Santiago, Don Francisco Ruiz, a resident of the city, made an exclamation against a bond deed that he said he had been forced to make in favour of Captain Don Pedro del Portillo, for 258 pesos, with a nine-month deadline to pay.²³ The money in question came from *ropa de la tierra* (traditional indigenous clothing) and ordinary laces, the goods that Pedro del Portillo deposited with Francisco Ruiz. But the goods were stolen from Ruiz, so he believed that he was not obliged to pay, but he was forced to do so. Ruiz was led on a false pretext to go with Pedro del Portillo to the Alcalde don Juan Luiz de Arcaya, where he was pressured to sign a bond deed: ‘Y sobre haberse este otorgante resistido oponiendo la excepción de que habiendosele robado no estaba obligado a la paga’.²⁴ The alcalde, not wanting to acknowledge the existence of the theft, threatened Francisco Ruiz with imprisonment. He accepted the obligation deed because he was in a hurry to leave; he had to return to take sheep and cow hides to the district magistrate of Aconcagua, north of Santiago, whom he was serving: ‘y porque [para que] no lo lastase su crédito ...’.²⁵

So, it was the alcalde’s threat of prison that made Francisco Ruiz – who came to protest the obligation signed by his own hand – give in. This case is quite like the *protestas por avería* legal acts before a notary that were practiced on ships when the merchandise was lost during transport. It is a kind of force majeure that allows the carrier not to be obliged to reimburse the goods. It is possible that Francisco Ruiz, a goods carrier, knew this possibility well and was therefore able to oppose the alcalde. But when the latter did not accept the theft thesis, he threatened Ruiz with prison, which put him in a situation of coercion, as the alcalde did indeed have this prerogative as a magistrate.

Sixty years later, Master Mariano Barros was forced by the legal advisor of the Intendant’s office to put an end to an obligation of a debtor who had not fully repaid his debt. This was a non-titled authority, but with strong coercive power and a significant ability to influence, which overcame Barros’s will:

viéndome yo en la forzosa e indispensable obligación de obedecer sus órdenes, pasé a hacer la expresada cancelación, guardando el respeto y veneración que se debe a los superiores, y excusar las malas consecuencias que se ocasionarían si me hubiera resistido a lo mando por lo que ha venido en exclamar de dicha cancelación en todo aquello en que le perjudique: y desde luego exclama de lo contenido y obrado por ella, y pruebas dadas por dicho señor teniente asesor letrado, una, dos, y tres veces, y cuantas el derecho le permitia ...²⁶

and granted his resignation to effectuate his profession in his sacred religion before Don Joseph Rubio, public notary and city council notary of this city. He made this resignation in the presence of Doña Mercedes Roxas, his mother, and to avoid displeasing her against the will of the grantor, and to not cause her any discomfort. In this resignation document, he left to his mother everything that pertained to her by inheritance and future benefits, except for five hundred pesos reserved for books. Therefore, and since as stated, the mentioned resignation was made against his deliberate will, exercising the power permitted by law, he declares and claims against the said resignation once, twice, and three times, and as many times as the law allows, so that it may not be valid or effective in court or outside of it. He wishes that his temporal goods and future inheritances, which might belong to him, be left to his sister Doña María del Carmen Herrera y Roxas so that she may inherit and enjoy them in virtue of this instrument, except for the five hundred pesos that he always reserves for himself and for books, as this is his final and deliberate will).

²³ Archivo Nacional Histórico de Chile, Escribanos de Santiago, vol. 493, 1731, 278.

²⁴ *Ibid.* (and regarding the fact that this declarant resisted, raising the objection that having been robbed, he was not obliged to pay).

²⁵ *Ibid.* (so that his reputation would not be harmed).

²⁶ Archivo Nacional Histórico de Chile, Escribanos de Santiago, vol. 912, 1790, 426-426v (Seeing myself in the forced and indispensable obligation to obey his orders, I proceeded to carry out the stated cancellation, main-

This shows the vulnerability of a creditor without coercive power over his debtors. In addition, the records show that this situation was not an exception but could occur throughout the colonial period. For example, in Lima in 1668, the widow Doña María Carrión exclaimed against a payment deed (*carta de pago*) that she made in favour of a convent to which she sold oil but had stopped paying her. The friars had forced her to make this *carta de pago* and declare herself satisfied and to donate the rest of what she was owed because one of her sons was a friar: ‘todo esto redundara de manifiesto daño de la otorgante’,²⁷ who claimed to be poor and burdened with debts ‘en que forzosamente a de ... a conceder asi por no litigar al presente por las muchas necesidades con una religión y el dicho provincial que le parece a la otorgante que es hombre aspero de condición como por que al presente esta ejecutada por muchos pesos’.²⁸

Under the Hispanic-Catholic monarchy, moral pressure made people give in. Thus, in Santiago in 1643, Doña Beatriz de la Herrera exclaimed against her violent husband, who, with the many expenses and debts he has incurred, is in some way somewhat known and heard of for spending and dissipating their dowry property. She declared that between her husband and her, ‘hemos tenido disgustos y pesadumbres’.²⁹ So, to avoid new conflict, she made an exclamation, specifying that it was to ‘conservar paz y amistad que se deben tener y guardar entre casados y personas nobles y de obligaciones principales y honrradas y como mujer temerosa y reselarme de no quedar del todo sin mi dote y arras’.³⁰

A little later, in Lima on 4 June 1669, a merchant named Lorenzo de Silva was unable to collect a debt. His debtor forced him to settle the matter before the ordinary court and then left town. Lorenzo declared:

por hallarse pobre y desvalido no pudo costear la dicha causa por lo cual ha carecido de valerse de la dicha cantidad y comerciar con ella en el corto trato que tiene ... sustenta sus obligaciones honrradas de mujer e hijos y al presente le han instado muchas personas de respeto y poderosas a que tome seis cientos pesos de a ocho reales y de carta de pago de toda la cantidad de los dichos ochos cientos pesos de a ocho reales y en especial el alferez don Joseph Calero por cuya mano le quieren hacer la dicha paga...³¹

In Santiago in 1794, two friends exclaimed to the *escribano* because they had regretted a charitable gesture and preferred to recant from an established obligation to prevent another friend from going to jail:

taining the respect and reverence due to superiors, and to avoid the adverse consequences that would arise if I had resisted what was ordered. Therefore, he has come to challenge the said cancellation in all aspects in which it harms him: and from then on, he challenges the content and actions resulting from it, and the evidence provided by said Lieutenant Advisor and lawyer, once, twice, and three times, and as many times as the law permits ...).

²⁷ Archivo General de la Nación, Lima, Protocolos Notariales, vol. 1800, 1668, 290 (and all of this would result in manifest harm to the declarant).

²⁸ *Ibid.* (that she is being forced to concede because of her many needs and because of the provincial priest who, in the declarant’s opinion, is a harsh man, and also because at present she is being pursued for many pesos).

²⁹ Archivo Nacional Histórico de Chile, Escribanos de Santiago, vol. 174, 1643, 160 (we have had disagreements and distress).

³⁰ *Ibid.* (preserve the peace and friendship that should exist and be maintained between married and noble persons of principal and honourable obligations, and as a distrustful woman fearful of being left completely without my dowry and arras).

³¹ Archivo General de la Nación, Lima, Protocolos Notariales, vol. 1800, 1679, 467-467v (Due to being poor and defenseless, he was unable to cover the legal case, which is why he has been unable to make use of the said amount or engage in trade with it in the short dealings he has ... He supports his honorable obligations to his wife and children, and at present, he has been urged by many respected and powerful individuals to accept six hundred pesos in eight-real coins and a payment receipt for the entire amount of the said eight hundred pesos in eight-real coins, particularly by Lieutenant Don Joseph Calero, through whom they want to make the said payment).

parecieron el maestro Manuel Cardosa y don Antonio Duran, como a cosa de las once de la mañana de dicho día, y dijeron que por cuanto el día de ayer diez y ocho el presente, como ahora de las ocho de la noche firmaron una obligación simple de cantidad de noventa y siete pesos a favor de don Juan Antonio Barcelona por don Juan Castañeda cuya obligación y firma hicieron y echaron estimulados de ver que el dicho don Juan Antonio llevaba a la cárcel al referido Castañeda con orden (quiza) supuesta del excelentísimo señor presidente y solo por librarle del sonrojo movidos de caridad. Pero reflexionando ambos que el primero no tiene bienes algunos pues los que posee son de su legitima mujer Juana Cruz, y el segundo de sus habilitadores y conociendo el gran perjuicio que se les origina exclaman de dicha obligación simple y su contenido una, dos, y tres veces; y cuantas el derecho les permite porque desde ahora, en mi presencia, y las de los testigos Declaran, que no quieren ni es su voluntad pasar por el contenido de ella ante dicha obligación.³²

Moral pressure affected all subjects of the king because they obeyed the mandates of Catholicism: to be a good wife, to be an honest debtor, to be charitable friends. These legal instruments illustrate to what extent this moral pressure could cause harm when one's own interests were damaged in the name of this Catholic duty.

4. *Courage to Protect Oneself or Courage to Protest and Speak the Truth?*

The study of exclamations relates to the experience of individuals in situations of subordination and whose will was altered when pledging their word. What all the situations in which individuals exclaim have in common is domination, strongly felt and difficult to resist. The circumstantial nature of domination is important because, in Hispanic-Catholic society, people's situations were liable to change over time or place (Milton 2007; Albornoz Vásquez 2014). Once liberated from constraints, individuals could confide in a public notary who would formally document particular circumstances. This could include disclosing the nature of a grandson who disavows his grandmother or specifying the age of wounds as either past or recent, as exemplified by the Indian and the slave mentioned at the outset of this text. These voices initially seem to be influenced by various constraints. However, because of their agency and the influence of their Catholic conscience, individuals freed themselves through their exclamations before the notary. This action reinstated legal validity to a speech that had been suspended or altered. Thus, subjugated speech does not signify the absence of will but rather its momentary alteration.

Thus, given the diversity of the parties involved and of notarial acts in colonial society, the dominant and the subjugated cannot be reduced to the opposition of two social groups (elite vs. popular classes) or, in the case of colonial societies, ethnic groups (Europeans, Africans and indigenous peoples), in which one had no choice but to submit to the values of the dominant

³² Archivo Nacional Histórico de Chile, Escribanos de Santiago, vol. 914, 1794, 312v-313 (Maestro Manuel Cardosa and Don Antonio Durán appeared around eleven in the morning of the said day and stated that on the previous day, the eighteenth of the present month, and now at eight in the evening, they signed a simple obligation for the amount of ninety-seven pesos in favor of Don Juan Antonio Barcelona in the name of Don Juan Castañeda. They made and signed this obligation and document, motivated by seeing that Don Juan Antonio was taking Don Juan Castañeda to prison under what seemed to be an order from the Excellency President of the Real Court, and solely to spare him from embarrassment, moved by charity. However, upon reflection, both realized that the first one has no assets, as the ones he possesses belong to his legitimate wife Juana Cruz, and the second has no assets as they belong to his guardians. Recognizing the significant harm it would cause them, they exclaim against the said simple obligation and its content once, twice, and three times, and as many times as the law allows, because from now on, in my presence and that of the witnesses, they declare that they do not wish to be bound by the content of the said obligation).

group. This would deny entire sectors of colonial society the possibility of expressing themselves through the notarial deeds. As mentioned before, the mechanisms at work, established by the institutions of the Hispanic-Catholic monarchy, protected the will of all subjects, even those under the tutelage or protection of others (such as wives before their husbands, or children before their fathers, or indigenous peoples, or members of religious orders before their superiors), so as to preserve trust in written speech. In fact, having the ability to act, was not a sufficient condition for going to the notary. The notaries were in cities, towns and villages, and their offices were open for access to all the king's subjects. Everyone knew where the notaries' offices were. This physical proximity and guaranteed accessibility facilitated the expression of complaints and the possibility of restoring a truth or obtaining legal protection against acts carried out under pressure. Therefore, it was also necessary that, in a given society, the notary (understood as an institution) could be considered a trusted place for individual expression. It is, then, an entire mechanism, a proceeding, that allows for the reversal of spoken words without altering general confidence in public writing. The archives as monuments, thus preserved, allow for the memory of those who are inscribed in these papers to be retained. In Hispanic-American societies, all the king's subjects could thus go back on their commitments, as their Catholic consciences could act *ex-post* on *faits accomplis*. They could also express their feelings about a situation that harmed or haunted them. Once their lives were over, the preservation of their memory, and particularly their memory through writing, fell to those who survived them in accordance with a 'politics of death' in Western societies that is accompanied by a written practice of death (Petrucci 2013).

However, during their lifetime, the conditions for access to the notary's office could be discriminatory. Hence the importance of considering each case individually. In addition, in the case of the exclamation, individuals had to realize that their will had been altered and explain how the lesion or prejudice was notorious. Men and women thus placed under constraint and possibly harmed could change the order of things that erroneously established their responsibility and *ex-claim*, literally 'to shout after', their injury and prejudice.³³

Exclamations are therefore the place of expression of a feeling of constraint and the mandatory force of certain previous facts or compromises whose effects would cause prejudice (Laé 1996). They are part of a set of legal instruments that allow for the possibility of lodging a complaint. The steps are: learning submission from superiors and everyone's expected behaviours; formation of a conscience of the possibility of contradicting in order to repair the error; gathering the courage to go to declare, protest, exclaim, complain. It is not easy to conceptualize, as historians trained in binary views of Hispanic-American society, the transition from a subject who expresses his or her will before a notary and then, once again before a notary, retracts and denies the voluntary act he or she initially performed. What prompts an individual to decide to exclaim, that is, to clamour *ex-post*, or to protest, a legal act that produces a testimony of oneself, of one's suffering and fears?

In the analysis of a testamentary clause of an Indian from Cajamarca, we argued that the declaration responds to a psychological necessity (Argouse 2010). Faced with a situation of constraint, which can be perceived as an aggression through the annihilation of the will, it is possible that the declarants felt the need to 'ex-claim', that is, to clamour *ex-post*, or to declare *para que conste* and demand justice. The psychological figure that is retained is that of the Freudian counterblow. Thus, testamentary clauses have been highlighted as a place of expression

³³ We thank Catalina León Lazcano for having suggested to us the idea of the etymology of the word as the very first explanation for the meaning to be given to this term.

for a speaking subject. In a colonial society, the spaces where it was possible to express oneself in writing were narrow and infrequent. But not non-existent, and above all, exclamations and protests demonstrate to us that it does not only occur on the brink of death. As we have seen throughout this text, it is not the fear of the final judgment that drives the subject to reconsider what they have done or to restore the truth. It is just as much about nullifying the effect of a legal act without altering public faith as it is about highlighting the violence or coercion they endured. It is up to the historian to search between the lines, amidst thousands of declaratory and exclamatory clauses, for the expression of these feelings to obtain justice.

Elsewhere, not only in a colonial society, there is also the idea of the notary's register as a place of accommodation or even a private justice, *justice de cabinet* (Garapon 1985), which would counterbalance expensive, slow and uncertain judicial practices. This would also make the notarial register the place where consensus is invented, necessary for maintaining social cohesion, through obligations, powers of attorney, debt acknowledgments, guarantees, etc. In addition to settlements (*avenimientos*), transactions, agreements and waivers (*apartamientos*). The notary's office therefore seems to represent a place where one can escape the grip of a tax-hungry and severe administration in terms of punishment and correction (Scardaville 2003). Without a doubt, the distance of the colonial territories allows for an exacerbation of these practices. Thus, in Lima in 1721, the public notaries specify that:

[en el registro del escribano] no solo se otorgan los instrumentos de los contratos y de ventas y remates sino otros muchos de disposiciones exclamaciones y negocios que piden toda seguridad y secreto que no pudiera guardarse manifestándose el registro original y pudiéndose seguir como se siguiera tan grave inconveniente y perjuicio a la fee y secreto que se confía de la legalidad de los escribanos en tales instrumentos.³⁴

Trust was placed in the hands of the notaries, who were relied upon for their confidentiality and took charge of a large part of the information that served the government from a distance (Brendecke 2016). The tensions arising from this distance gave notarial practice a certain relevance in defusing daily violence. Rather than the justice of judges, the parties came before the notary seeking a consolation that contributed to defining a common sense in colonial society (Albornoz Vásquez 2012; Argouse 2021). With confession, declaration and especially exclamation before a notary, there was the possibility of expressing a whole range of legitimate feelings and promises in a Catholic world that granted them an important place, and of restoring the balance of values. The practice of 'going to exclaim' maintained an ancient practice of self-expression, like confession, and allowed for the constitution of 'speaking subjects' who participated in the definition of a common sense inscribed in the notarial registers (Clanchy 1993; Dulong 2002; Bertrand 2015).

The presence of these exclamations in the archives of Lima or Santiago raises questions about the intentions and circumstances that governed the individual's ability to commit in writing, to declare, and the possibility of bringing forth the voices of those who were, or felt, under

³⁴ Archivo General de la Nación, Lima, Gobierno, 1, 4, 27, 1721, 25, 'José de Garazatua, administrador de las Reales rentas de alcabalas de Lima, sobre que los escribanos cumplan con remitir certificaciones de las ventas que se otorgaron ante ellos para el control de alcabalas', Antre Real Acuerdo de Justicia, s/n ([In the notary's register] not only are the instruments of contracts, sales, and auctions recorded, but also many others related to dispositions, declarations, and business matters that require full security and confidentiality. These cannot be maintained if the original register is made public, as it would lead to significant inconvenience and harm to the trust and secrecy placed in the legal integrity of the notaries regarding such instruments).

constraint at the time of deposition or commitment. The constraint before a notary appears, in fact, as a brake on self-assertion and a flagrant contradiction to the very principles of legal acts, which must be established in complete freedom of the subject who gives his or her word and/or consent. However, we wanted to show that in a colonial Catholic society of the Ancien Régime, it may have been otherwise, and that constraint is, on the contrary, a condition of possibility for the written expression of truth. There is a paradoxical idea here: it is precisely because there is a constraint that a form of truth appears in these acts, deeply anchored in a Catholic culture. Morality constantly delves into consciences and seeks harmony in the face of colonial violence. The language of truth then entered American notarial practices, between the volition and the freedom to express oneself.

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Recovering the Written Traces of Hernando de Soto's Voyage to La Florida

Catalina Andrango-Walker
Virginia Tech (<candrang@vt.edu>)

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Abstract

In 1539, Hernando de Soto arrived in Cuba expecting to colonize the North American territory for Spain within four years. Even though he did not leave a personal account, several survivors of this expedition wrote about this journey. In addition to the official accounts of Rodrigo Rangel and Luis Hernández de Biedma, there were other anonymous accounts told and penned by common men, which were later used in canonical works. This is the case of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's *The Florida of the Inca* (1605), which is based on a story that a Spanish cavalier related to the author, also corroborated by forgotten short accounts written by Juan Coles and Alonso de Carmona. Likewise, a Portuguese man, who accompanied de Soto, wrote *Relaçam Verdadeira*, published in 1557 in Portugal. *Relaçam* was translated into English in 1609 by the English writer Richard Hakluyt (1553-1616) under the title *Virginia Richly Valued*. This essay focuses on these collective testimonies, oral and written, that kept and shaped the story of failure in La Florida. I analyze how these intellectuals not only appropriated the previously dismissed memories of these common men, but also adapted them according to their imperialistic purposes.

Keywords: Empire, Garcilaso de la Vega, Hernando de Soto, La Florida, Richard Hakluyt

1. Introduction

In his *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (1535), Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, the first official chronicler of the Indies, narrates the adventures of Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León and his arrival in an area of the New World that he named La Florida. In his narrative, Fernández de Oviedo focuses in particular on Ponce de León's vanity because, according to him, the explorer reached this land 'buscando aquella fuente de Bimini, que los indios avian dado á entender que hacia renovar é retoñesçer é refrescar la edad é fuerças del que bebia

ó se lavaba en aquella fuente' (1853, 621).¹ The chronicler's characterization of Ponce de León's naivety, since he was apparently deceived by indigenous people in his search for the so-called fountain of youth, undermines the importance of his accomplishments. Yet, despite his absurd belief in such a myth, Ponce de León's explorations were a great boon to the Spanish Empire because they expanded the territorial reach of the Spanish Crown to include much of what is today the southeastern part of the United States, which became incorporated into the Viceroyalty of New Spain.²

In the two and a half decades after Ponce de León first arrived in the region, at least three significant expeditions, including those of Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón (1526), Pánfilo de Narváez (1528) and Hernando de Soto (1539), ended in failure. As McGrath states, 'None of them found the great wealth they sought, but each contributed to the mystery of what might be found there' (2013, 407). One early traveler who furthered European curiosity with the wonders of La Florida was Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (1485-1492-c. 1559), who was one of the four survivors of Narváez's 1527 shipwreck. For approximately eight years, Cabeza de Vaca and his three companions explored the southern region of what is today the United States, often walking around lost and naked (Cabeza de Vaca 2010, 77) and living among different, sometimes hostile, and other times friendly, groups of Native people. Upon his return to Spain in 1537, he told Charles V, king of Spain, that La Florida 'was the richest countrie [sic] of the world' ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, A2).³ Cabeza de Vaca hoped to return to La Florida as governor; however, the king had already conferred that position on Hernando de Soto (1500-1542).

At that point, de Soto had already experienced the riches of the New World. He landed in Central America as a teenager in 1514, soon becoming a skilled soldier; there he also met Francisco Pizarro, who later took him to South America (Blanton 2020, 1). After the capture of Atahualpa in Cajamarca in 1532, de Soto was rewarded for his participation in the fall of the Incan empire, receiving part of the ransom in gold that the Inca had paid to Pizarro in return for his freedom. When de Soto returned to Spain a very wealthy man, he was able to lend money to the emperor. In return, Charles V made him 'Governor of the Isle of Cuba, and Adelantado or President of Florida; with a title of Marques of certain part of the lands, that he should conquer' ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, 2). For this venture, the newly appointed governor and several other men invested the fortune they had gained in Peru, returning to the New World in 1539.⁴

¹ (looking for the fountain of Bimini, that the Indians had told him renews, revitalizes and refreshes the age and strength of whoever drinks from or washes themselves in those waters). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

² Fernández de Oviedo's assessment of Ponce de León's enterprise also foreshadows the way Spaniards treated these new lands decades later. As John McGrath notes, 'Even as Cortez's [sic] conquest of Mexico reawakened Spanish hopes of finding vast riches in America, many rulers and merchants alike considered trade with Asia to be a higher priority than the discovery of new lands' (2013, 405). Since all the nautical endeavors of the time had already proved that La Florida did not offer a "Western Passage" into the Pacific' (406), the fact that it was not as rich a land as Mexico or Peru also made it less attractive to the Spanish Crown.

³ This translation has two editions; the second one appeared in 1611, but Hakluyt changed its title to *The Worthye and Famous History of the Traveiles, Discovery, & Conquest, of that Great Continent of Terra Florida*. I will use this edition when citing from Hakluyt.

⁴ Hernando de Soto arrived first in Cuba; after several months on the island, in 1539 he departed for Tampa Bay. As Ignacio Avellaneda explains, the exact number of people who accompanied him differs from author to author; however, it seems that an approximate number might be 650, including priests, navigators, royal officials, scribes, lawyers, blacksmiths, carpenters and other artisans (1997, 213-214). Charles Hudson has reconstructed de Soto's route, taking into account archeological and documentary information. He asserts that de Soto would have traveled through present-day Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri,

De Soto did not leave a personal account of his journey through La Florida; nevertheless, several survivors of the expedition wrote about the enterprise, giving details and describing failures. In addition to the official accounts of his personal secretary, Rodrigo Ranjel, and of Luis Hernández de Biedma, who had served as a factor in the expedition, there were other anonymous accounts told and penned by more ordinary figures, which were later used as primary sources for later canonical works.⁵ This is the case of a Portuguese man from the region of Elvas, who accompanied de Soto in his adventure to North American territory. This anonymous author, currently known as the Knight of Elvas, wrote *A relação verdadeira*, which was published in 1557 in Évora (Portugal). *A relação* was translated several times into English, the first of which was done in 1609 by the English writer Richard Hakluyt (1553-1616),⁶ under the title, *Virginia Richly Valued, by the Description of the Mainland of Florida*. Hakluyt, known for fiercely promoting the English colonization of North America through his writing, used de Soto's intention to 'seek another treasure, like that of *Atabalipa* in La Florida' ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, 54), to criticize Spanish greed. Forty-eight years later, also in Portugal, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1616) published *La Florida del Inca* (1605), which is based on a story that an anonymous Spanish cavalier related to the author. His oral account is partially corroborated by the short and, until then, forgotten manuscripts written by two other soldiers on the expedition, Juan Coles and Alonso de Carmona. This production and circulation of narratives about La Florida in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries responded to a desire for eyewitness testimonies about a contested land where European empires hoped to extend their territorial dominance.

In this article I focus on the collective testimonies, both oral and written, that established and maintained the story of the Spanish empire's failure in La Florida. My work deals with what *La Florida del Inca* and *A relação verdadeira* (and the translations of this last work) tell us about the agendas of the authors and translators who, through their sources, constructed and reconstructed de Soto's adventures in North American territory. I analyze how these intellectuals not only appropriated the previously dismissed memories of these ordinary men, but also adapted them to shape their imperialistic purposes, which were to construct history and legitimize the Spanish presence in that territory, in Garcilaso's case, and in the case of Hakluyt, to advance British ambitions to colonize North America. While Garcilaso compiled the witnesses' memories playing heavily on the rhetorical device of him being only a 'scribe' and the eyewitness being the real author of his work, Hakluyt's approach is different. He translated a text that had been long published; however, 'The Epistle Dedicatorie' that he includes at the beginning of the book delineates the reason for translating this account, which is linked to his own ideological position. By analyzing the discursive appropriations and narrative strategies of both intellectuals, neither of whom set foot in La Florida, I show that the campaign to take control of this territory was not only military, but it was primarily discursive.

Louisiana, and Texas. For more information on the details of de Soto's trip, see Charles Hudson's map (1997, 320); also see Milanich 2006 and Blanton 2020.

⁵ Although Ranjel and Fernández de Biedma wrote accounts that began to circulate in the early 1540s, much earlier than the works of the Knight of Elvas and Garcilaso, both accounts were not printed until the nineteenth century. Ranjel's original account does not exist; however, it appeared embedded in Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo's *Historia general*, published for the first time in 1851 (Galloway 1997, 12). For more information on Ranjel's and Biedma's accounts, see Bourne's Editor's Introduction in *Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto* (1904, v-xx); see also the United States de Soto Expedition Commission 1939, 4-11.

⁶ Hakluyt studied Latin, Greek, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian. These languages were very helpful at a time when travel accounts about the exploration of the New World were proliferating, especially in Spanish and Portuguese (Mancall 2007, 4).

Individuals seeking to record the past in the Iberian Peninsula inherited their traditions of history writing from the Ancient World. Historian Carlo Ginzburg asserts that ‘for the Greeks and Romans historical truth was based on *evidentia* (the Latin equivalent of *enargeia* proposed by Quintilian); for us, on evidence’ (2012, 12). For the Greeks, testimony regarding the events was a condition for historical discourse. The witness’s perspective, and the testimony of the eyewitness, prevailed over that of the one who only heard secondhand about the facts. In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle explains that human beings search for the truth by linking it to their natural desire for knowledge. He states, ‘not only with a view to action, but even when no action is contemplated, we prefer sight, generally speaking, to all the other senses. The reason for this is that of all the senses sight best helps us to know things, and reveals many distinctions’ ([980a] [21]). However, from the outset, there was no consensus on how to present historical evidence since, in many instances, there was no desire to reveal the whole truth of events. Ginzburg refers to Quintilian’s comments on this incompatibility, ‘“For he who desires to obscure the situation will state what is false in lieu of the truth, but must still strive to secure an appearance of palpability for the facts which he narrates” ’ (2012, 12). So, presenting the truth, or the appearance of truth, while narrating historical events became more a ‘question of persuasion, linked only marginally to an objective weighing of the facts’ (*ibid.*).

Columbus’ arrival to America contributed not only to European geographical expansion but also broadened European knowledge about the world, simultaneously transforming historiographical practices and their conventions (Subrahmanyam 2005, 28). During the sixteenth century, the written histories of the New World and its people, based on accounts left by travelers, soldiers, missionaries and others, created a sensation with European audiences. They were eager to know more about the composition of this fourth geographical area that was revolutionizing their well-established knowledge of a tripartite world. As a result, intellectuals were forced to rethink this assumption. At the same time, they had to think about how to write the history of this New World, which from the outset, following Greek historiographical tradition, ‘relied increasingly on the authority of the eyewitness during the decades that followed the discovery and conquest’ (Zamora 1988, 39). Margarita Zamora divides historical narrative into two categories:

the bookish histories written from a distance and lacking direct contact with the material, and those which challenged them based on the authority of eyewitness testimony, either as an attribute of the actual narrator of the account or of the privileged source on whose prerogative the validity of the history rests. (40)

In this context, knowledge of the Americas and its peoples came mainly from narratives of European incursion into foreign lands, written by the men who participated directly in the voyages to the New World and the colonization process. Their writings, known collectively as *crónicas de Indias*, were disseminated in the authors’ original languages. Many of them were also translated into other European languages and even depicted through images.

However, when competing with the bookish histories written by intellectuals who had never been outside of Europe, eyewitness writers faced another challenge: the question of their authority to present testimony. The Western conception of history depended heavily on alphabetic writing, and as such, its prominent representatives were a lettered elite who adhered strictly to the historiographical rules, models and theories of that time. The producers of ‘official history’, that is, the narratives that were ‘“approved” or “authorized” history, history that receives governmental sponsorship and support’ (Kagan 2009, 3), were familiar with theoretical treatises of Italian humanists such as Coluccio Salutati, Lorenzo Valla and Giovanni Pontano, as well as Spanish intellectuals like Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, Hernando del Pulgar and Juan Luis Vives,

among others.⁷ Yet, these humanist treatises, written by and for humanists and mostly written in Latin, were mainly out of reach of the common soldiers who traveled to the New World in search of fortune (Kohut 2009, 155).

Consequently, while the writers of these official histories depended heavily on centuries of knowledge, the early chroniclers of the Americas based their authority to write history on praxis and their personal experience as the protagonists of the events. This is the case for the soldiers who accompanied de Soto to La Florida, some of whom wrote their own accounts of the voyage. Other early chroniclers, as in the case of Garcilaso's informant, gave oral testimony of their deeds. Although these soldiers seemed unfamiliar with historiographic treatises, the intellectuals who used their stories were not. The narratives of these soldiers became official through the knowledge of the intellectuals who transformed their oral testimonies into history, as in the case of Garcilaso de la Vega. Likewise, the translators of *A relação verdadeira* tried to authorize the anonymous author's narrative by resorting to his *hidalguita* (chivalry) and nobility as proof of the Knight of Elvas' reliability. Thus, the Portuguese cavalier's written account was often contrasted with the oral testimony of Garcilaso's common soldier informant.

2. La Florida del Inca: *The Oral Testimony of a Common Soldier*

Divided into six books, *La Florida del Inca* relies mainly on the testimonies of one soldier, whom Garcilaso calls 'my author' but never mentions by name. The identity of the informant was a mystery for a long time. Only at the beginning of the twentieth century did scholars start paying attention to Garcilaso's anonymous source, concluding that the soldier's name was Gonzalo Silvestre. Edward Gaylor Bourne, in *Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto*, published in 1904, states:

I venture to conjecture that he was the cavalier named Gonçalo Silvestre, whose experiences in the expedition are narrated in considerable detail. In fact, in Garcilaso's narrative only de Soto himself, his successor, Luis de Moscoso, and Juan de Añasco receive as frequent notice as Gonçalo Silvestre, who is not even mentioned by the "Gentleman of Elvas." After the expedition was over Gonçalo Silvestre went to Peru. About the year 1555 he returned to Spain in poverty. (ix)⁸

The years that Silvestre spent in Peru coincided with the period when Garcilaso, who was a teenager in 1555, was still living in his native land, and where they apparently met. Recent research such as that of José Miguel Martínez Torrejón corroborates Bourne's speculation regarding the informant's identity. In 2021, Martínez Torrejón published 'Epítome del descubrimiento de la tierra de la Florida', written by Garcilaso himself shortly after 1596, when he was seeking support for the publication of *La Florida* (14).⁹ It is only in this text that Garcilaso mentions Gonzalo Silvestre as the source for his book (2021, 14).

In the 'Proemio al lector', *El Inca* lists his sources and describes the efforts he made to write a book that had been in preparation for a very long time. Garcilaso states:

⁷ For more information on how these historiographical treatises influenced the writing of 'official history' and their possible intersection with the writers of the *crónicas de Indias*, see Kohut 2009.

⁸ In 1903, a year prior to Bourne's publication, R.B. Cunninghame Graham, using the information about Silvestre that Garcilaso provided in *La Florida*, wrote an account of the soldier's adventures in the de Soto enterprise (see Cunninghame Graham 1912).

⁹ The 'Epítome' appears in *Los pre-textos de La Florida del Inca*.

Conversing over a long period of time and in different places with a great and noble friend of mine who accompanied this expedition to Florida, and hearing him recount numerous very illustrious deeds that both Spaniards and Indians performed in the process of the conquest, I became convinced that when such heroic actions as these had been performed in this world, it was unworthy and regrettable that they should remain in perpetual oblivion. Feeling myself therefore under obligation of two races, since I am the son of a Spanish father and an Indian mother, I many times urged this cavalier to record the details of the expedition, using me as his amanuensis. (de la Vega 1951, xxxvii)¹⁰

This statement confirms Garcilaso's familiarity with historiographical models and theories for history writing at that time. Following these models, which were influenced by Greek philosophers who privileged the authority of the eyewitness in recounting the past, Garcilaso highlights Silvestre's credibility. His main informant and friend is not only trustworthy, but also a noble hidalgo, who 'as such prided himself on speaking the truth in all matters' (xxxviii). By aligning Silvestre's lineage with moral values, the author grants authority to his work. Furthermore, Garcilaso reinforces his oral informant's reliability by noting that the Royal Council of Indies had called upon Silvestre on several occasions as a trustworthy witness to corroborate certain facts about the events that occurred during the expedition of La Florida and other endeavors in which he took part (xxxviii-xxxix). This fact makes Silvestre's knowledge official and cements his credibility in the process of history writing.

Regarding Silvestre's deeds in the New World, Garcilaso states that 'He was a very fine soldier, performing frequently as a leader; and since he participated in each of the events of the conquest, he was able to supply me with complete details of the history as they occurred' (xxxix).¹¹ Silvestre's status as a soldier and active participant in the events in La Florida is also problematic because 'watching and fighting cannot well be carried on simultaneously' (*ibid.*). Garcilaso anticipates the criticism that his work will receive, as others attempt to undermine its credibility. Using his own experience on the battlefield (Garcilaso joined the Spanish army to fight in the Rebellion of Alpujarras [1568-1571]), he states that during conflict it is very common 'to relate the most notable events of a battle afterward in the presence of the general and the other officers' (*ibid.*). Garcilaso also explains that when someone talked about 'a very brave deed which was difficult to believe, those who heard him went out to see what actually had been done and to verify the report with their own eyes' (*ibid.*). Once more, Garcilaso privileges the sense of sight, equating it with truth as a way of authorizing his source and the veracity of that testimony.¹²

To demonstrate the importance of this project and the extent of his dedication to it, Garcilaso also relates the chronology and different places where he has had to compile his narrative. Garcilaso explains that, despite his and his informant's desire to write de Soto's story, there were several difficulties. Both friends had not seen each other in a long time; furthermore, Garcilaso had joined the Spanish army and had gone to war. Moreover, after delaying this undertaking for twenty years, he decided to move to Silvestre's town to serve him as a scribe of his memories (xxxvii). Finally, to preserve the true facts of the expedition, Garcilaso corroborates Silvestre's account with other primary written testimonies by eyewitnesses. As such, he introduces the

¹⁰ All the quotes from *La Florida* come from the translation of the book by John G. Varner and Jeannette Varner (de la Vega 1951).

¹¹ While recounting Silvestre's protagonism in the expedition, Cunninghame Graham points out that 'on his arrival in Florida, Gonçalo quickly went to work. Sent with a squadron under Captain Baltasar de Gallegos, he formed part of the first expedition to the interior of the land' (1912, 204).

¹² For a more complete analysis of the relationship between the tongue and the eye in the process of history writing in Garcilaso's work, see Egan 2018.

testimony of Alonso de Carmona, from the village of Priego. Like Silvestre, Carmona also went to Peru after six years spent in La Florida. When he returned to his homeland, he wrote an account of these two 'peregrinations, as he called them' (xxxix).¹³ Afterward, he sent his writings to Garcilaso for him to examine them. The Inca describes Carmona's testimony as 'brief and without order as to time and events and with a few exceptions without names of provinces, does tell, by skipping from one place to another, the most notable events of our history' (xxxix-xl).

Likewise, brevity and disorganization are the characteristics of the narrative of Juan Coles, another soldier who related his experiences of the expedition. Coles wrote at the request of the Franciscan friar Pedro Aguado, who, to better serve the king, 'had gathered many diverse accounts from trustworthy people concerning the discoveries they had seen accomplished in the New World, and he had made a particular collection of stories about the first exploration of the Indies' (xl). Unfortunately, Aguado, while busy with other missions, apparently left a very rough draft of the works he had compiled at a printer's shop in Córdoba. Garcilaso found Coles' account there, 'very badly treated and ... half-consumed by moth and rats' (*ibid.*). He clarifies that by the time he found Coles' testimony, he had already finished writing *La Florida*. Nevertheless, this happy discovery served to corroborate that everything Silvestre had told him was accurate. As a result, Garcilaso was compelled to include Carmona's and Coles' names and testimonies because 'presenting two witnesses who confirmed the statements of my own author, I would show that all three accounts were really one and the same' (*ibid.*). Although the Inca was aware of the flaws in the narratives written by Carmona and Coles, he also acknowledged their contribution to his project since both accounts helped to substantially reinforce the authority of his eyewitness.

Garcilaso reveals his awareness of the act of history writing in his critique of Coles' and Carmona's accounts. Carmona's is a perfect example of a narrative by an author more interested in recounting his adventures for the entertainment of a few acquaintances, describing the novelties he had seen and experienced in the New World, than in engaging in a serious historiographic exercise. Garcilaso confirms that this was Carmona's objective when he sent him his manuscript, considering that they had probably known each other since their time in Peru. Furthermore, Garcilaso attributes Coles' and Carmona's errors in writing to the fact that they wrote about their firsthand experiences without any intention of publishing them, or at least not doing so under their own names. Thus, in the case of Coles, the Inca speculates that the failure to organize his narrative 'in a historical manner' is because the manuscript was intended to be published anonymously. Garcilaso deems Coles' account to be written in a 'legal style', in which the soldier recounts 'what he remembered more as an eyewitness than as the author of the work, believing [that fray Aguado] who had asked for the story would arrange it suitably for printing' (xli). Garcilaso also explains that in these two very short narratives, the authors omitted essential details, such as the locations and other important incidents in which they did not participate. However, despite these flaws, they contribute to corroborating specific facts related to the events in which Coles and Carmona did participate, and that are important to prove the veracity of Silvestre's testimony (xlii). Furthermore, including these soldiers and their testimonies is also Garcilaso's way of recognizing other participants of de Soto's expedition, an enterprise in which people from several parts of Europe took part.

¹³ Note here the vocabulary that the soldier Carmona uses to portray his adventures in the New World as a religious enterprise rather than an economic and military one.

3. A relação verdadeira: *Nobility and Intellectual Authority*

Among a group of Portuguese cavalier hidalgos (xxxvi) who departed from the region of Elvas was the author of *A relação verdadeira dos trabalhos que ho Governador Dom Fernando de Souto e certos fidalgos portugueses passaram no descobrimento da provincia da Frolida. Agora novamente feita per hum fidalgo d'Elvas foi impressa pela primeira vez em casa de André de Burgos* (1557). At the time when Garcilaso was writing *La Florida*, the Knight of Elvas' book was the only account of de Soto's travels through La Florida that was already in print. It is possible that Garcilaso may have been familiar with it because he arrived in Europe in 1560, only three years after its publication, and his first stop was Portugal (Martínez Torrejón 2019, 138).¹⁴ *A relação* appeared only fourteen years after the survivors of de Soto's voyage arrived in Mexico in 1543. The book contains only brief details about the Portuguese men's participation in that voyage. Moreover, there is no indication of who the author is since he preferred to remain anonymous. *A relação verdadeira* was reedited in its original language for the first time in 1844 under the title *Relação do descobrimento da Florida*. Its editor, Joaquim da Costa de Macedo, wrote the introduction in which he deals with the question of authorship, a matter to which he had devoted extensive archival research. Costa de Macedo reports that, despite his efforts to determine the author's identity among the survivors of the expedition and those who were still alive by 1557, this had become an impossible task by the time *A relação* was published (Mateus Ventura 1998, 13).

The reedition of *A relação* in Portuguese in the nineteenth century contrasts with its popularity in other languages; for example, between 1609 and before 1940 it had been translated into English, French, and Dutch (Mateus Ventura 1998, 14). In the most recent Portuguese reedition of the book, Maria da Graça Mateus Ventura notes that its wide dissemination outside of Portugal is due not so much to its wealth of information but rather to it appearing before other accounts not published until decades later (*ibid.*). The earliest translation into English is Richard Hakluyt's, who titled it *Virginia Richly Valued By the description of the maine land of Florida ... Written by a Portugall gentleman of Elvas*, published in 1609 (Knight of Elvas 1609). The translation was produced at a critical moment for England's ambitions in the New World, with the purpose of 'encourage[ing] the young colony in Virginia, and to procure an increase of support for that undertaking, at a period when its chances of prosperity were but precarious' (Rye 1851, i-ii). This translation was re-edited only two years later, but with a different title, *The Vvorthye and Famous History, of the Travailles, Discouery, & Conquest, of that great Continent of Terra Florida* ([Knight of Elvas] 1611). As one of the main promoters of the establishment of the first English settlement in North America, Hakluyt felt compelled to change the title 'as a fresh temptation to adventurers, and to stimulate the exertions of the colonists themselves' (Rye 1851, iii). Moreover, rather than Virginia, the new title emphasizes La Florida, more than likely because the book has little to do with Virginia. With the changes in the title, any mention of its author, the Gentleman of Elvas, or Knight of Elvas, also disappears. The disappearance of the Knight of Elvas from this translation reflects the relatively small amount of importance that the translator conferred upon the original author; even in his prologue to the first edition, Hakluyt does not spend any time discussing the identity of the Portuguese soldier who wrote *A relação*.

¹⁴ In 'The Incestuous Soto Narratives', Patricia Galloway demonstrates the relations of dependence, which she calls 'a unidirectional chain of influence' (1997, 11), linking *A relação verdadeira*, Rodrigo Ranjel's account and Garcilaso's *La Florida*. For Galloway it is very likely that Ranjel's account was fundamental for *A relação*, which later influenced Garcilaso's book. The critic concludes that this chain of influence does not mean 'that there is nothing genuine or original in these latter two works; just that what is new has little to do with Indians and can only be discerned after careful historiographical criticism' (39).

Critics have long opined on the matter of authorship, but they have given little attention to the author's identity. Instead, they have focused on comparing *A relação* with *La Florida del Inca*. These comparisons have mainly dealt with matters such as the credibility of the sources for each text. Besides Hakluyt's translation of the Knight of Elvas' account, there were other translations of this work into English. According to William Rye, an anonymous version appeared in 1686 that '[was] very inferior to that of Hakluyt, and erroneous as to numbers, distances, and names of places' (1851, iv). Titled *A Relation of the Invasion and Conquest of Florida by the Spaniards*, it was not translated directly from Portuguese but from a French edition published the previous year (*ibid.*). In the preface of *A Relation of the Invasion*, the anonymous translator declares the superiority of the Knight of Elvas' narrative over *La Florida del Inca*, 'not only [sic] for its Rarity, but for the Merit of its Author' (Gentleman of Elvas 1686, A4). To this, the author adds that *A relação* has 'the advantage to be an Original, and to come from the first hand [participant]' (*ibid.*). This statement is a critique of Inca Garcilaso, who, despite working with three different versions of the story of the expedition, was not an eyewitness himself.¹⁵

Unlike Hakluyt in the first two translations, using the very brief details in *A relação*, the anonymous translator of the 1686 edition pays more attention to the identity of the Knight of Elvas. In arguing the credibility of the Portuguese author, the anonymous translator says:

The Title of the Relation informs us, that our Author was a *Portuguese* Gentleman of the town of *Elvas*, and that he accompanied *Soto* in all that Expedition. He is certainly one of those who are named in the second Chapter, though he cannot be particularly known, since he has been unwilling to name or any other way distinguish himself from the rest; and that instance of a modesty which is not to be found but amongst men of the best breeding, is a very good voucher for his sincerity. (Gentleman of Elvas 1686, A4v)

Like Garcilaso in his preface, the anonymous author of *A Relation of the Invasion* grants authority to the Knight of Elvas by using his lineage and equating it with moral values. However, if for Garcilaso his informant stood out for being a *hidalgo noble* and was therefore trustworthy, the anonymous translator discredits Silvestre, Garcilaso's source, for being nothing more than a simple private trooper. Therefore, when comparing the status of both men, the translator concludes, 'it is to be observed, that a Gentleman, as he was, hath commonly more knowledge and a greater respect for Truth, than a private Souldier [sic]' and that would be possible since 'It is very probable that his Birth and Quality made him to be admitted into the most important Councils and Deliberations; and the particular account he gives of them, is sufficient to confirm this Opinion' (Gentleman of Elvas 1686, A5).¹⁶ Taking at face value that the Portuguese author defines himself as a *caballero* in *A relação*, the translator concludes that this anonymous knight's moral values and the privileges of his lineage put him in a position of authority to tell the truth, a necessary condition for writing history. More recent scholars, such as Patricia Galloway, disagree with the critics who attributed

¹⁵ In other accounts, defenses of Garcilaso's credibility concern the origin of the authors and their loyalty to the empires to which they belonged. This is the case of Theodore Irving who, in the preface of *Conquest of Florida*, compares both narratives and their sources, finding that Garcilaso has more credibility because, 'the Spanish cavalier from whom he derived his principal information being more likely to be admitted to the intimate councils of his commander than one of a different nation, and being free from the tinge of national jealousy which may have influenced the statements of the Portuguese' (cited in Rye, 1851 xxx).

¹⁶ Several passages in which important decisions were made, according to the Portuguese author, contradict this speculation that he was part of de Soto's inner circle. For example, when de Soto is on his deathbed, he gathers all the more prominent people to advise them about his successor and inform them of his final wishes. The author does not include himself as an eyewitness to this event, but instead uses the third person plural to narrate what de Soto told them to do ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, 128-129).

credibility to the Knight of Elvas solely on the basis of his rank and chivalry. For Galloway, the lack of serious studies of *A relação*, not only from a literary but also from a historical perspective, makes 'such facile evaluations ... at best premature and at worst flawed' (1997, 18).¹⁷

As shown in these cases, the concepts of nobility, chivalry and *hidalgúia* had significant implications for the writing of history. Chivalry, a concept that in Western culture was associated with 'loyalty, gallantry, adventure, friendship, civil life, and honor' (Rodríguez-Velasco 2010, 1), was also broadly associated with purity of blood. However, in the fifteenth century works such as *Espejo de verdadera nobleza* by Diego de Valera advocates for 'a new social and ethical paradigm ... his revaluation of virtue and nobility has a clear target: to promote the public good, as well as personal recognition and social advancement based on merit' (Peters 2020, 310). The characteristics of these merit-based nobles were connected with 'virtue, erudition, and civic-minded moral education founded on classical models: the new noble, therefore, is defined according to his moral character and personal conduct' (311). In the cases of Garcilaso's informant and the Knight of Elvas, both individuals share several of these characteristics, which were essential to authorize their reliability, and, at the same time, the narratives written around them used their deeds as sources of didactic instruction.

4. Floridian People Seen Through European Eyes

The question of lineage as a measure of credibility applies not only to the eyewitnesses who accompanied de Soto to La Florida. It reappears when Garcilaso refers to his own noble heritage as the Peruvian son of a royal indigenous woman and noble Spanish father. He establishes himself as a lettered man, knowledgeable regarding the methods of Western historiography and familiar with other languages and cultures. He shows his intellectual capabilities in his activities as a translator of *Dialoghi d'amore* by León Hebreo and as a commentator of the history of his native Peru which, at that time, as he declares, was a work in progress (de la Vega 1951, xliii-xliv).¹⁸ Since the competence to tell the truth is paired with noble origins, he uses his own background to show what he had witnessed from his privileged position regarding the Spanish expansion into his native land. Moreover, as a subject living through that political expansion, Garcilaso states that he feels compelled to write about de Soto's adventures because of his biracial heritage (xxxvii). Therefore, the act of writing is also an act of loyalty to the Spanish crown, and at the same time, the multicultural perspective he offers accredits him as a proper cultural translator, a more prominent role than that of the amanuensis which he claims to have while writing *La Florida*.

The eyewitnesses of the expedition to La Florida who are the source of information for *A relação* and *La Florida*, the Knight of Elvas, Silvestre, Coles and Carmona, were, like the majority of the members of the expedition, Europeans and first-time travelers to the New World. Therefore, they interpreted what they saw according to 'the modern Western episteme [which] not only established itself as universal, but subjected indigenous knowledges by relegating them to the domains of superstition and witchcraft' (Rabasa 1995, 84). In this regard, Garcilaso, as a person who shared two cultures, establishes himself as a mediator. However, his ambivalent position, as Lisa Voigt

¹⁷ In explaining the lack of a comprehensive study of *A relação*, Galloway also points out that the scholar who had compared Ranjel's account with the Knight of Elvas' book failed to address the issue of intertextuality. For her, it is necessary to further consider the role of André de Burgos, the publisher of *A relação*, and the issue of the book trade in the sixteenth century (1997, 19).

¹⁸ Curiously, Garcilaso never calls himself an author of his works. Instead, he is a translator (*Dialoghi d'amore*), a scribe (*La Florida*), and a compiler (*Comentarios reales*).

explains, ‘is neither that of the imperial authority who demands news about the New World nor of the resistance subaltern who repudiates the demand. *La Florida del Inca* both draws on and takes the place of the conquistadors’ eyewitness account of the region’ (2009, 103). Garcilaso highlights his position from the beginning; not only by repeatedly calling himself an Indian, but also by including Floridian Natives from very early on, most specifically in the title of his work, *The Florida of the Inca. A history of the Adelantado, Hernando de Soto, Governor and Captain of the kingdom of Florida, and of other the heroic Spanish and Indian cavaliers, written by The Inca, Garcilaso de la Vega, an officer of His Majesty, and a native of the great city of Cuzco, capital of the realms and provinces of Peru*. This gesture signals that *La Florida* relates the story of the prominent conquistador, but also focuses on the deeds of the ordinary men referred to as ‘Spanish and Indian cavaliers’.

Considering that European travel narratives during the sixteenth century depicted indigenous people by relegating them to the category of savages, and taking into account the exclusively European conception of chivalry, it is unusual to see Spanish and Native people sharing the epithet ‘cavalier’ in the title of *La Florida*. However, this categorization shows Garcilaso’s understanding of historiography. If, on the one hand, following Aristotelian principles and influenced by historians of ancient times, he is obsessed with truth, on the other he is also inspired by a tradition of Spanish chronicles, which are ‘rich repositories of myth, legend, and archetype’ (Dowling 1997, 101). Lee Dowling explains how Garcilaso departed from the factual and sometimes dry discourses promoted by the historians of the medieval period in favor of ‘the development of the historical subject within a fully discursive narrative format’ (100). This fact becomes evident in the way Garcilaso draws on European images and topoi that highlight poetic motifs. Such is the case of cacique Vitacucho’s speech, whose eloquence, according to Garcilaso, was comparable to that of the Italian Renaissance poets Ariosto and his predecessor, Count Matheo Maria Boiardo, authors of *Orlando furioso* and *Orlando innamorato*, respectively (de la Vega 1951, 133). Besides these epic references, there are also allusions to Roman history. For instance, when describing the meeting between de Soto and the Lady of Cofachiqui, the Inca compares this encounter to Trajan’s description of the majestic Cleopatra when she ‘went forth to receive Marc Anthony on the river Cyndnus in Cicilia’ (299). In this manner, Garcilaso shows that he is up to date with the way of writing history in the culture of his time, ‘A culture which through its emphasis on the creative element of history writing implicitly placed imaginative historical prose, poetry and drama alongside the factual accounts of royal chroniclers or the dispatches of diplomatic envoys as so many specimens of the *ars historica*’ (Kluge 2022, x).

Regarding epic poetry, critics such as Dowling consider that Alonso de Ercilla’s epic poem *La araucana* (1569) may have had a significant influence on the writing of *La Florida*. Not only is *La araucana* closer to Garcilaso’s time, but it also deals with the same topic of the Spanish conquest attempt in the New World. Dowling suggests that ‘While Ercilla, like Garcilaso, never ceases to ringingly endorse providential imperialism ... it is a fact that his indigenous characters clearly outshine the ones of his own race, at times even assuming an unmistakable moral superiority’ (1997, 112). Indeed, Garcilaso also includes several episodes in which he highlights the honorable character of Floridian people. One of them appears in the story of Juan Ortiz, a native of Seville, who spent twelve years in captivity in La Florida after being captured while searching for Pánfilo de Narváez. When his current captor, cacique Mucoço, learns about de Soto’s arrival in the region, he summons Ortiz. The cacique, who had saved Ortiz from the fury of Hirrihigua, his first captor, frees Ortiz, reminding him how he had offered him his friendship and protection over the years. In return, Mucoço requests that Ortiz tell de Soto not to harm him or his people while, at the same time, welcoming de Soto and extending his friendship to him (de la Vega 1951, 76).

In contrast, in the Knight of Elvas' narrative, the author does not focus much on Ortiz's captivity. Instead, the reader briefly learns the main details of how he was captured, and the hardships he went through while living with Hirrihigua, who in *A relação* is called Ucita, in accordance with the name of his chiefdom. Later, the Knight of Elvas narrates Ortiz's escape from his first cruel captor and explains why he remained in the friendly territory of Muçoço. The focus of the Portuguese author is on how Ortiz was rescued, which was very advantageous for the travelers because, from there on, he served them as an interpreter. Garcilaso instead offers many more details, which help to contextualize the character of Indigenous people. For example, while talking about Hirrihigua's cruel treatment of Ortiz, which, according to the Knight of Elvas, was because they worshipped the devil ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, 23), Garcilaso explains that his mistrust is the result of the violence he and his people had endured when Pánfilo de Narváez had first arrived in their land. Hirrihigua had direct experience of the Spaniards' cruelty since they had cut off his nose and 'had cast his mother to the dogs and permitted them to feed upon her body' (de la Vega 1951, 68). None of these details are explained in *A relação*, leading the reader to merely speculate about Hirrihigua's viciousness.

As well as providing additional details about all these aspects, Garcilaso offers more insights into the nature of Ortiz's captors. For example, he gives prominence to Muçoço, whom he holds in high regard. Commenting on the cacique's gesture towards Ortiz as he was allowed to reunite with the Spaniards, Garcilaso affirms that,

although a barbarian, [Muçoço] behaved towards this Christian in a manner far different from that of the famous Triumvirate of Laino (a place near Bologna), which made a never sufficiently abominated proscription and agreement to exchange relatives, friends, and protectors for enemies and adversaries. And, too, his behavior was much more admirable than that of other Christian princes who since then have made bargains equally odious, if not more so, when one considers the innocence of those delivered up, the rank of some of them, and the fidelity which their deliverers should have had and respected. For the betrayed were infidels, whereas their betrayers took pride in the name and doctrines of Christianity. Violating the laws and statues of pagan realms disrespecting the very existence and rank of kings and great princes, and valuing even less their sworn and promised fidelity (a thing and word of such name), these Christians, solely to avenge their anger, exchanged people who had not offended them for those who had, thus giving up the innocent for the guilty. (73-74)

Garcilaso thus equates the Floridian natives with the heroes of the European tradition of epic poetry, and the dignity and nobility with which he characterizes them elevate the Spanish actions in La Florida since they are fighting equally heroic people. Thus, considering Garcilaso's locus of annunciation as an 'Indian', as he proudly describes himself, and considering that his writing of history is an act of fidelity to the Spanish crown, we can better understand Garcilaso's *mestizo* position as an intellectual living between two worlds and cultures.

This intersection of race and culture, his multiculturalism, makes him more than a compiler and scribe of history. As Voigt suggests, Garcilaso

goes beyond simply providing news of Florida to serve the cause of imperial and religious expansion. He also accounts for the imperial violence that has left the province in "desolation," provoking, in turn, the "rage and cruelty" of the Floridians toward the Spanish missionaries. Nevertheless, Garcilaso concludes this episode—and the volume—by calling for Christian mercy rather than justifying revenge. (2009, 104)

Garcilaso's role as a cultural mediator makes him capable of translating the frustration, and at the same time, explaining the rage and cruelty of the Floridian inhabitants, otherwise described in other accounts as savages.

Furthermore, as discussed by Voigt, this humanizing approach towards indigenous people comes from Garcilaso's multicultural and multilingual background. Nevertheless, Portuguese travelers from the Elvas region were not entirely strangers to other cultures either. Garcilaso maintains that some of them 'had fought on the African frontiers' (de la Vega 1951, 22);¹⁹ in fact, the anonymous Knight's familiarity with Africa appears in the final chapter of *A relação*. There he talks about the great diversity of flora and fauna in La Florida, stating that 'There be many wild hennes as big as turkies, padridges small like those of Africa, cranes, duckes, pigeons, thrushes, and parrows' ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, 179). Perhaps the mention of the size of the African partridge comes from common knowledge, or perhaps the Knight of Elvas had been in Africa, as well as the rest of his fellow travelers. However, his exposure to other cultures is different from Garcilaso's multicultural upbringing and subaltern epistemic formation. Scholars have pointed out that Garcilaso's American origins were not only a factor in the humanization and empathy with the Floridian people but also contributed to the authority of his own writing (Rabasa, 1995, 91; Voigt 2009, 103). This credibility to write about the New World can be seen in Garcilaso's details about the Floridian inhabitants, which contrast sharply with the approach taken by the Knight of Elvas.²⁰

In *A relação*, there is an extensive description of the land and its nature; however, the encounters between the different caciques and the Spaniards are less detailed and even generalized to the point that many of them seem formulaic. In most episodes, the caciques' welcoming speeches start with words of admiration for the Spaniards, a pledge of allegiance and even a request not to hurt them. This is the case of the Indian lord Patofa; de Soto meets him after passing 'through a towne, the lord whereof was named Cosaqui' ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, 46). Patofa, who had found out ahead of time about de Soto's arrival, utters upon meeting him,

Mightie lord, now with good reason I will crave of fortune to requite this my so great prosperitie with some small adversitie; and I will count myselve verie rich, seeing I have obtained that, which in this world I most desired, which is, to see, and be able to doe your lordship some service. (*ibid.*)

Moreover, Patofa ends his speech in a very docile manner by offering, 'For mine owne part, from my very heart with reverence due to such a prince, I offer my selfe unto your Lordship, and beseech you, that in reward of this my true good will, you will vouchsafe to make use of mine owne person, my Countrie, and subjects' (46-47). These lengthy speeches are repeated in every town de Soto visited with almost the same structures, except for the two caciques who do not welcome the Spaniards.²¹ For Galloway, these discourses are only 'literary devices, not real

¹⁹ This is not something that the Knight of Elvas mentions in his account; however, this detail contributes to a better understanding of the Portuguese travelers, about whom we have little information. Garcilaso includes this detail when describing their departure from Sanlúcar de Barrameda for La Florida: 'In the *Buena Fortuna*, a galleon just like the *Concepción*, Captain Andrés de Vasconcelos, a native cavalier of Yelves, traveled with a very splendid and brilliant company of Portuguese gentlemen, some of whom had fought on the African frontiers' (de la Vega 1951, 22).

²⁰ Nonetheless, Garcilaso has been criticized for his pompous language (Rye 1851, v), in contrast with the Knight of Elvas' style, which William B. Rye has deemed as 'natural, plain, and without ornaments, such as the stile [sic] of a discourse ought to be' (vi). Rye, a nineteenth-century historian with a completely different concept of history, also adds that the Knight of Elvas 'never wanders from his subject into useless digressions, as Garcilaso de la Vega doth' (*ibid.*). The Knight of Elvas' direct style has an impact on his view of the Natives and his lack of recognition of them as human beings.

²¹ One of them is cacique Casqui, who offers gifts to the newcomers as he recognizes their power, telling them that 'although you came into my countrie, killing and taking captives the inhabitants thereof and my subjects: yet I determined to conforme my will unto yours' ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, 95). Another cacique who offers 'a most

speeches. Because the speeches reproduce conventions of *European* feudal power, and because they are so conventional, we will never know from them what kind of power—if any—southeastern *caciques* wielded over their people' (1997, 20). Indeed, these speeches not only annul the *caciques*' agency, but also show the lack of cultural understanding on the part of the Europeans.

Garcilaso also narrates these encounters; however, his version is more extended and different, demonstrating a better comprehension of the structure and complexity of indigenous societies. According to Garcilaso's informant, after departing the province of Achalaque, de Soto traveled to the neighboring province of Cofa. From there, he and his people went to the Cofaqui province, governed by Cofa's elder brother, 'a man who was richer and more powerful than his kinsman' (de la Vega 1951, 273), warned by his brother and by one of de Soto's messengers, who was sent there to solicit the curaca's friendship,²² Cofaqui prepared himself for their arrival 'in the company of many noblemen magnificently arrayed with bows and arrows and large feathers as well as rich mantles and marten and various other skins, which were as nicely dressed as the best of those to be found in Germany' (275). After a very friendly exchange, during which the Spaniards received plenty of welcome gifts, de Soto informed Cofaqui about his intention to go to another province called Cofachiqui, for which Cofaqui offered supplies and assistance. With this assistance, the natives were trying to gain de Soto's favor and protection since they had been enemies with the Cofachiqui people for generations. Therefore, curaca Cofaqui summoned an 'Indian *apu* (which in the language of Peru means the captain general of supreme in any office) whose name was Patofa' (278). By comparing the societal structure with the one in his native Peru, Garcilaso presents another version of the story. According to the Knight of Elvas, Patofa was the lord of his land. Instead, in *La Florida*, Garcilaso clarifies that he is a general in charge of defending Cofaqui's land and honor. Moreover, he does not make any direct speech welcoming de Soto; rather, he pledges to avenge his people with the help of the Spaniards (279). In his portrait of the people of La Florida, Garcilaso underscores their resemblance to Europeans by highlighting the nobility of Mucoço, the splendor of Cofaqui, who, to receive his visitors, dressed in the elegant manner of the Germans. Moreover, he reveals his own association with, and understating of, native cultures by drawing a parallel with Peruvian society and its power structures.

As my analysis highlights, the writings about La Florida that are part of this study are fragments of memories, penned not by official historians, but written and told by common people and later refashioned by intellectuals knowledgeable about historiographic methods. The editors and translators of *A relação verdadeira* in the early seventeenth century show us how their roles were intertwined with those of the travelers and merchants during the formative years of the British Empire; in that regard, historical narrative was another form of imperialism. William Sherman highlights the role of translation of foreign travel literature during a time when England was lagging behind its continental rivals. In this context, he states, 'As travellers [sic] made contact with new regions and peoples, authors and editors translated the world for an audience at home that was increasingly eager to hear news of the wider world and to reflect on England's place in it' (2004, 205). As such, Sherman, following other critics, compares the market for travel books with the demand for other commodities, such as 'sugar, tobacco, spices

wittie and stout answer' is the *cacique* of Quigalta, who does not want to receive de Soto unless he proves that he is the child of the sun, as he has affirmed all along. He asks de Soto to show his powers and to dry up the river (124).

²² Garcilaso prefers to use the word *curaca*, a term used in Quechua to define a community's leader. After the Spanish invasion the term *cacique* became the designation for such leaders, who also became the representatives of Indigenous people before the Spanish authority.

and silk' (*ibid.*). The success that *A relação verdadeira* enjoyed in English translation, based on the number of times it was reedited, confirms that the information it offered was attractive to possible settlers. *Virginia richly valued*, the original title of the first English translation, which appeared only two years after the establishment of the first permanent English colony in North America, reflects Hakluyt's desire to invigorate this struggling endeavor.

Indeed, Hakluyt, the first translator of the Portuguese account, in his dedication 'To the Right Honorable, the Right Worshipfull Counsellors, and others cheerefull adventurors for the advancement of that Christian and noble plantation in Virginia', expresses his desire for the counsellors 'to know the present and future commodities of our countrie; or the qualities and conditions of the inhabitants, or what course is best to be taken with them' ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, A2). Hakluyt's evaluation of La Florida is very positive, highlighting the richness of the land in commodities such as cotton, gold, silver, stones of great value, among others (*ibid.*). On the contrary, the translator's assessment of Floridian people is ambivalent and ranges from an appreciation of the eloquence of the caciques to the inferiority of these inhabitants when compared to the Europeans. Thus, if the Knight of Elvas' descriptions of the encounters between the natives and de Soto seem mostly formulaic within the narrative, Hakluyt, in his translator's dedication to the English version, does not question even for a moment these representations. Instead, he has words of admiration for the eloquent speeches made by the caciques. In a short statement dedicated to explaining 'the manners and dispositions of the inhabitants', the translator states:

among other things, I finde them noted to be very eloquent and well spoken, as the short orations, interpreted by John Ortiz, which lived twelve yeeres among them, make sufficient prooffe. And the author, which was a gentleman of Elvas in Portugall, employed in all the action, whose name is not set downe, speaking of the Cacique of Tulla, saith, that aswell this Cacique, as the others, and all those which came to the Governour on their behalfe, delivered their message or speech in so good order, that no Oratour could utter the same more eloquently. (A4)

While praising the Native caciques' eloquence, the English translator does not consider how problematic and unreal these discourses are. Not only do the words of the caciques penned by the Portuguese conqueror negate agency to the Native leaders, but they also fail to reveal important aspects of the encounters, past and present, between Floridians and Europeans. The case of Hirrihigua, detailed only by Garcilaso, is an excellent example of how the natives kept their memories of Pánfilo de Narváez alive for more than a decade; in Hirrihigua's case, the memory of Narváez's violence was inscribed on the cacique's own body. Neither the Knight of Elvas nor his translator mention that aspect of the story, focusing instead on the cacique's violence.

In fact, immediately after praising the intellectual capacity of the natives for making eloquent speeches, Hakluyt criticizes their behavior:

But for all their faire and cunning speeches, they are not overmuch to be trusted: for they be the greatest traitors of the world, as their manifold most craftie contrived and bloody treasons, here set down at large, doe evidently prove. They be also as unconstant as the wethercock, and most readie to take all occasions of advantages to doe mischief. They are great liars and dissemblers; for which faults often times they had their deserved painments. And many times they gave good testimonie of their great valour and resolution. (*Ibid.*)

Such generalizations of the natives contrast with Hakluyt's translation theory, previously expressed in 1601. He affirms that 'a good translator ought to be well acquainted with the proprietie of the tongue out of which, and of that into which he translateth, and thirdly with the subject or matter it selfe' (Galvão 1601, vi). Although Hakluyt had a mastery of other European languages, among them Portuguese, neither he or the Knight of Elvas understood any indigenous languages, deeming

it impossible for them to confirm the accuracy of the interactions the latter had observed between Europeans and Natives. On the other hand, Garcilaso is able to underline some interpretative mistakes caused by language barriers, even though neither he nor Silvestre had any knowledge of Floridian native languages. However, as a philologist with a strong linguistic awareness, and well versed in the linguistic mistakes that Spaniards made in Peru, Garcilaso is able to reflect on these issues.²³ As Voigt states, ‘Linguistic misunderstanding is perhaps the most common example of confusion cited by Garcilaso, whose task is to clarify what a monolingual or monocultural observer could be incapable of comprehending’ (2009, 115). As a result, the Portuguese author and his translator’s description of completely foreign cultures resulted in the dismissal of their history and their political structures. Thus, Hakluyt’s descriptions of New World people contributed, through his preface, to cementing the image of the savage in the European imagination.

5. Conclusion

Although the scribe (Garcilaso) and the translator (Hakluyt) took different approaches regarding the presentation of de Soto’s voyage, both intellectuals took unofficial accounts and instilled them with authority for the benefit of their respective empires. Garcilaso, stating his reasons for adhering to true facts while composing his history, declares that his purpose in writing *La Florida* is ‘inciting and persuading Spaniards by my history to acquire the land of Florida for the augmentation of Our Holy Catholic faith’ (1951, xliii). His statement is timely, since Spain’s power to control that region was in decline.²⁴ Likewise, Hakluyt, who published his first collection of travel writings in 1582, at a time when England did not occupy any territory in the New World, continued his efforts to advance England’s imperial expansion with the translation of *A relação verdadeira*.²⁵ In his dedication, after describing the savage nature of the Floridian people, he proposes

To handle them gently, while gently courses may be found to serve, it will be without comparison the best: but if gentle polishing will not serve, then we shall not want hammerours and rough masons enow, I meane our old soldiers trained up in the Netherlands, to square and prepare them to our Preachers hands. ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, A4)

This approach to colonization is intended to be a critique of Spanish treatment of natives in the New World at a time when translations of Spanish accounts and ‘The descriptions of the Spanish conquest in the New World profoundly shaped the representation of the Habsburg tyranny in Protestant Europe, where the American Indians were often idealized as “noble savages” and presented as potential allies in the fight against Spain’ (Pirillo 2013, 34).

In the process of writing history, the Portuguese soldier’s authority relies on his condition as an eyewitness and his status as a *fidalgos*; similarly, the credibility of Hakluyt, the English

²³ In the ‘Preface to the reader’ of his *Royal Commentaries*, Garcilaso states his discontent with the way learned Spaniards had written the history of the New World, and states that his ‘purpose is not to gainsay [those authors], but to furnish a commentary and gloss, and to interpret many Indian expressions which they, as strangers to that tongue, have rendered inappropriately’ (de la Vega 1989, 4).

²⁴ For a study of Spanish efforts to defend their territories in La Florida, not only militarily but also religiously, see Turner Bushnell 2006.

²⁵ As early as 1582, when he published *Divers voyages*, his first collection of travel writings, the translator expresses his frustration that England had fallen far behind its continental rivals. In his dedication to Philip Sidney, Hakluyt states, ‘I Maruaile not a little ... that since the first discouerie of America ... after so great conquests and plantings of the Spaniardes and Portingales there, ... wee of Englande could neuer haue the grace to set fast footing in such fertill and temperate places, as are left as yet vnpossessed of them’ (¶1).

translator, rests on his reputation as a lettered man. For both European authors, those facts were enough to be deemed trustworthy. Instead, Garcilaso finds himself penning the history of a territory that Spain considered peripheral from an ambiguous position. Not only must he prove the credibility of his eyewitness *hidalgo* soldier, but he also must deal with his *mestizo* identity to legitimize his work. Frank Salomon and Stuart Schwartz noted the challenge of categorizing and defining individuals of mixed races, such as the *mestizo*, a category that was opposed to *castizo* in colonial times (2008, 477); moreover, Spaniards regarded *mestizos* as ‘anomalous and harmful’ (478). This suspicion toward mestizos made them fall out of the documentary records, transforming them into a ‘disappearing category,’ as Joanne Rappaport argues. With this, Rappaport implies ‘that under particular circumstances, people classified as mestizos dropped out of the mestizo slot and into other categories’ (2014, 10). Garcilaso navigates his mestizo identity in a particular manner. As an intellectual settled in the Peninsula, some of the prejudices previously mentioned, such as the anomaly and the harmfulness attributed to *mestizos* did not affect him because he inserted himself into Spanish society as a man of arms and letters. Instead, he subverts these negative constructions of identity and uses his dual indigenous and Spaniard heritage to authorize his writing. Thus, by the end of his preface, the Inca pleads that his history be received as authentic, requesting that ‘I be pardoned its errors because I am an Indian. For since we Indians are a people who are ignorant and uninstructed in the arts and science, it seems ungenerous to judge our deeds and utterances strictly in accordance with the precepts of those subjects which we have not learned’ (de la Vega 1951, xiv). This appearance of false modesty constitutes a criticism of how imperial powers deemed indigenous people’s intellect as inferior. Thus, using his assumed illegitimacy in the eyes of his Spanish readers, Garcilaso legitimizes his history built on oral and written testimonies from common soldiers.

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Kurusu Kwatia (Inscribed Cross) Written Culture and Indigenous Memory in the Reductions of Paraguay (Eighteenth Century)*

Eduardo Santos Neumann
Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul
([<Eduardosneumann@gmail.com>](mailto:Eduardosneumann@gmail.com))

Abstract

In the history of the Guaraní reductions, one of the themes that has attracted attention is the indigenous opposition to accepting orders to move after the Treaty of Madrid was signed by the Iberian monarchies in 1750. At this time, there was intense use of writing by the Guaraní, prompting a 'written reaction'. They wrote several texts, using arguments against the implementation of the exchange of eastern missions with the Colônia do Sacramento. The refusal of the indigenous people to abandon their reductions triggered a conflict known in historiography as the Guaranitic War. At the beginning of March 1756, about a month after the Battle of Caiboaté, in the place where the indigenous militia was defeated by the Iberian armies, some leaders of the Reduction of São Miguel erected a large cross with an inscription written in Guaraní (*Kurusu Kwatia*). It is an epitaph, in the Guaraní language, reporting episodes from that battle. The text, signed by Miguel Mayra, was only located three years after the events. This type of exposed writing is an indigenous memory of past events, episodes assessed by the rebel population as worthy of collective remembrance.

Keywords: Colonial Frontier, Guaraní Mission, Indigenous Memory, Indigenous Writing, Written Culture

1. Introduction

In recent decades, there have been important advances in ethnohistorical production regarding the indigenous reductions administered by the Jesuits in colonial Paraguay, with respect to traditional interpretations previously disseminated about the

* This article was translated from Portuguese to English by Mary Carvalho Walsh; the excerpts in Guaraní were translated from Spanish to English by the same translator in collaboration with the author.

past of the missions.¹ The appreciation of indigenous participation in the management of these communities, in addition to the originality of the political-administrative institutions,² has enabled a better understanding of the functioning of these Indian villages, especially from the perspective of historical anthropology, which has highlighted the active role played by the Guaraní (Wilde 2003).

These reductions, after overcoming a series of external and internal adversities, experienced a period of marked growth, both economic and demographic.³ In the middle of the eighteenth century, the Jesuit Province, whose borders were never clearly defined, had approximately thirty villages of Christianized indigenous people. The positive results obtained in these reductions were a result of political, social and cultural measures promoted by the Jesuits with the aim of co-opting the Guaraní to participate in this new colonial community.

In the history of the Guaraní reductions, one of the themes that is currently attracting the attention of researchers is the opposition of the indigenous peoples to accepting the order to migrate after the Treaty of Madrid (1750) was signed between the Iberian monarchies. This triggered a 'written reaction' from the Guaraní living in the reductions, who wrote several texts presenting arguments against the implementation of the exchange of the eastern missions with the Colônia do Sacramento. During this period, there was an intense use of writing by the indigenous people, which resulted in the Guaranitic War (1754-1756). The extensive circulation of messages, letters and notices, exchanged between indigenous people, Jesuits and the colonial authorities, is surprising. The appreciation of written communication by the Guaraní is the result of both the investment in documentary research and the new readings applied to this documentary corpus and, on the other, reflects the importance attributed to the capacity for action of the indigenous communities. In this essay, I intend to discuss the uses of writing by the Guaraní who agreed to live in the reductions under the Jesuit administration in colonial Paraguay.

However, even in the face of researchers' recognition of the importance of writing in the work of converting indigenous peoples in Hispanic America,⁴ historical research has not yet paid proper attention to the impact that the introduction of literacy had on the social organization of these communities. The traces of indigenous writing, which can be located in several archives, indicate that there is still much to be investigated with regard to the transformations caused by the 'domestication of the wild mind',⁵ in the face of the conquest of the alphabet by the indigenous population of the reductions.

Even in the face of evidence of indigenous alphabetic skills, some researchers have still insisted on the premise that the documentation produced by the Jesuits was the only testimony

¹ The first researches with this focus began to be published in the mid-1960s. These are the works of anthropologist Branislava Susnik (1966 and 1979-1980) and Maxime Haubert (1967), in addition to the research of Bartomeu Melià (1969, 1970 and 1986).

² Regarding the functioning of political-administrative institutions in reductions, see Kern 1982.

³ The population of these reductions in the mid-eighteenth century reached approximately 150,000 inhabitants. The demographic growth was related to the standard of living and resources enjoyed by the Guaraní missions, such as food, clothing and sanitary measures. For a description and detailed data about the general conditions of this growth, see Maeder 1992.

⁴ To find out more about the effects of writing on the colonization of the indigenous imagination, see Gruzinski 1991 and 1999.

⁵ Jack Goody was an English anthropologist who studied the effects caused by the introduction of alphabetic writing in traditional societies. According to him, writing is one of the tools responsible for the development of the human intellect – it is a personal experience capable of transforming cognitive processes and, therefore, of playing a role in the 'domestication of the wild mind' (1988).

of such an experience.⁶ However, contrary to this assumption, there is irrefutable evidence that the Guaraní of the reductions were actually able to write.⁷ This is why it is still possible to find many documents written in the handwriting of the indigenous people in the archives.⁸ Since the beginning of this century, researchers from various countries have been paying attention to the documents written by the mission Indians (Wilde 2001; Ganson 2003; Melià 2003 and 2005; Neumann 2005, 2008 and 2015; Boidin 2014; Couchonnal and Wilde 2014). These texts, located in various different archives, libraries and even collections, are being translated and their linguistic/idiomatic expression carefully analysed.⁹ The identification of a corpus of documents written in Guaraní has helped in making a break with the traditional and even colonial view of the history of the Guaraní reductions.¹⁰

Studies of written culture have been pointing out the impact of this technology on the way of thinking as well as on how sociocultural realities are translated (Goody 1987 and 1988; Charrier 1988; Bouza 1998 and 2001; Castillo 1999 and 2006; Petrucci 1999 and 2013; González Sánchez 2007). There seems to be constant friction regarding the assumption that the Guaraní were passive members of that society – as suggested by traditional historiography about the period – and the analysis of the actions promoted by the literate indigenous members of the reductions. Taking into consideration the strategic goals effectively assigned to writing by the Guaraní they no longer come across as indigenous populations at the mercy of mediators. They now appear to have been literate men who directly interacted as political subjects in the colonial society. In effect, writing ‘civilizes’, enabling them to gradually exert influence both on decision-making as well as in interactions with different social stakeholders, becoming protagonists of their own actions.

The set of documents, originally written in Guaraní (and later in Spanish), indicates the need to reassess current diagnoses regarding the dissemination of indigenous writing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Graphic output from the missions, documented in a diverse array of supports and presenting different types of purposes, compels us to undertake a broad reappraisal of simplistic analyses that previously considered the ‘actuarial’ activity of indigenous mission populations to be a minor fact or even restricted to merely copying religious texts (Neumann 2005 and 2007).

Even in the present day, through analysis of the documents produced by the Guaraní, it is possible to identify some of the characteristics that shaped writing in the reductions, as they came

⁶ This is the stance of the German historian Félix Becker who, in the eighties, used to pose the argument that the letters written by the rebellious Guaraní had actually been dictated by the Jesuits. Such a perspective sets aside any sort of indigenous participation in negotiations once it regards the Indians as mere puppets in the hands of priests (1983).

⁷ The pioneers in the study of texts written in Guaraní were linguists such as Marcos Morinigo (1946) and Bartomeu Melià (1969). In recent articles, Bartomeu Melià devoted attention to the documents written by the Guaraní as actual mission and Paraguayan history sources (1999, 2000 and 2005).

⁸ The textual production of the Guaraní even aroused suspicion, as it was exceptional for Europeans to recognize the literacy skills of indigenous people, even those who were Christianized. As Barbara Ganson noted: ‘The Spanish officials were not convinced by these Guaraní letters. The Marqués de Valdelirios, the Spanish envoy in charge of the boundary commission, and others thought the Jesuits, not the Guaraní, had written them because they believed that Guaraní were incapable of composing such fine manuscripts’ (2003, 102).

⁹ Documents written by indigenous people in their own languages have been the object of attention by researchers from different countries. The localization and translation of these documents is one of the objectives of the LANGAS project – Langues Générales d’Amérique du Sud (Quéchua, Guaraní) XVI et XIX siècles – developed together with the Institute des Hautes Études de l’Amérique latine, at the University of Paris III/INALCO, coordinated by Capucine Boidin and Cesar Itier. Another initiative dedicated to research into the Guaraní language being development at the University of Kiel, PEKY Project (*Proyecto Kwatia ymaguare*) under the coordination of Professor Harald Thun, whose focus is linguistic changes in the Guaraní language.

¹⁰ For recent publications that used these documents, see Shawn 2020 and Owensby 2021.

up with new functionalities in favour of shared cultural models.¹¹ Hence, it is by focusing on indigenous clerical skills – in distinct material formats such as letters, notes, *cabildos* (minutes of local councils), diaries or historical overviews – that it is possible to gauge the range of usage that the Guaraní dedicated to their own literacy skills as well as the demands they were intended to meet.

In fact, in the beginning literacy was encouraged among the ‘main indigenous representatives’ of the Guaraní,¹² therefore promoting the necessary means for them to further elaborate new forms of graphical expression. From particular circumstances of contact with the ‘literacy universe’, written language gradually became regarded as valuable and consequently applied within the area of the reductions, mainly among those who were members of the mission ‘elite’.¹³ The sort of treatment accorded to the indigenous noblemen, as well as the appointment of skilled leaders to occupy specific social functions, was a constant theme present in the Hispanic-American colonial legislation (Wilde 2006).

It is well known that for several years the literate work carried out by these particular indigenous individuals was indeed focused on translating and adapting religious texts rather than activities of creative expression *per se*. Similarly, we are aware that the gradual increase in the number of individuals capable of registering their opinions through writing was an outcome of several generations of Guaraní whose literacy skills had been progressively cultivated, thereby favouring a modification in the relations among individuals and in the literacy universe itself – and this had visible repercussions on daily mission routines.

2. Kurusu Kwatia – *Inscribed Cross*

In the early phase of evangelization, priests used simple means of support to promote the transmission of fundamental Christian values to the Guaraní. In order to spread the values of Christian catechesis, the Jesuits resorted to the introduction of the *kurusu kwatia* (the inscribed cross), as pointed out by Ruiz de Montoya in his *Tesoro de la lengua Guaraní* (1639). The cross, besides being sacred, also became the holder of written words, and acquired a quite specific term in Guaraní to denote the object.

The writing of messages on crosses as used by the Jesuits holds an undeniable relation with the practice of what Petrucci calls ‘exposed writing’.¹⁴ In Europe inscriptions are widespread and these are now historic records which are currently being valued and analysed in several academic circles. In the period that ranged from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, there was an expansion of this practice, which went beyond public epigraphs. It was a means of expressing

¹¹ I use the notion of ‘appropriation’ as formulated by Michael de Certeau, who sought to explain that the operations carried out by groups or individuals considered to be ‘subjected’ were actually inventive capacities (1998). I also draw on the contributions of the historian Roger Chartier, who invites us to reconsider the issue of cultural consumption, not only from the perspective of an uneven distribution of written objects but above all in terms of their differential uses (1988, 1993 and 2001).

¹² The ‘main Indians’ were those individuals who performed leading functions in a given community, as was the case with the *tuvichás* (chiefs). By accepting to live in a Reduction the most outstanding Indians were elevated to the role of leaders within these Christian villages, according to the needs of each Reduction (Wilde 2009).

¹³ For a thorough profile description of the members of the mission elite as well as the tasks performed, see Haubert 1990, 223-232.

¹⁴ The concept of ‘exposed writing’ was formulated by Armando Petrucci: ‘... by this term I mean any type of writing designed to be used in open or closed spaces, which allows a plural (in-group, massive) reading, from a distance, of a text written on an exposed surface. Its displayability and, therefore, the exposure itself, make it a medium for potentially massive communication, or, in any case, more numerically relevant than it would have been had it been a text contained in a book or on a piece of paper destined for individual reading’ (1999, 60).

the aspirations of semi-literate populations who, according to Petrucci, struggled to gain visibility for their own written productions and made a stand against the elite and power groups.

Written inscriptions with a cross as medium have been explored in the history of the missions. They could either signal territorial domains, *ervais*,¹⁵ or serve as guiding signs for external publics – that is, to be visualized by Iberian colonizers. In the location of *Campos de Cima da Serra*,¹⁶ the Guaraní made use of inscriptions on crosses, seeking to make a clear point regarding their early occupation of that territory. In 1727, when a Portuguese man named Francisco de Souza Faria was opening cattle routes in *Campos de Cima da Serra* the first thing he came across were significant herds of cattle. These animals pertained to the *Vaqueria de los Pinares*, an area which had been designated for cattle breeding by the Guaraní,¹⁷ where ‘crosses in a language blending Spanish and Tape were placed by the Indians’ – and that is the reason why these specific fields in *Campos de Cima da Serra* became known as *Cruzes dos Tapes*.¹⁸

Unfortunately, we do not know anything about what was carved on those crosses; nonetheless there is a considerable likelihood that they were warnings, signalling who the animals on that grassland belonged to. In the historic register of the City Council of Laguna, dated 1734, there is recorded information about another cross located ‘em cima da terra’,¹⁹ which bore an inscription ‘uma escrita pela língua da terra’.²⁰ The inscription was a warning from the Guaraní, ‘promising war’ in the event that it became necessary to defend the pathway, known as the *tranqueira* (insurmountable barrier). In both cases, the written language used by the indigenous group was recognized by the colonizer. It expresses a situation of precedence over these lands and, consequently, over the animals grazing on it. The warnings, in Latin-style writing, were addressed to the Portuguese who, during their work to establish a road to connect Southern America with the region of Minas Gerais, used to loot the *Vaqueria de los Pinares*, located in the middle of the route.

The practice of demarcating territories with crosses was also found in certain reductions whenever the possession of *ervais* was claimed, before some sort of litigation. A dispute over an *erval* (Paraguayan tea field) between San Miguel, San Juan and the Reduction of Conceição was resolved by Father Pedro de Cabrera, who ruled in favour of San Juan. To avoid any further doubt on the matter, he ordered the boundaries to be demarcated with several crosses and had a marker stone erected with the following inscription: ‘Year of 1742. These fields have been marked and these stone crosses laid, along with the lettering that may be seen on them, by order of Father Pedro de Cabrera, in the presence of the Commissioner Pedro Chaury, the Secretary Francisco Cuaracy and four other men of both peoples’ (Porto 1954, 338).

In that period, written language served to affirm the authority of a given power, in the

¹⁵ *Ervais* are places where a certain native plant, a Silvester tree from South America, is extracted or harvested. This plant is known by the name *yerba-mate*, scientifically known as *Ilex Paraquariensis*. *Yerba-mate* is a type of beverage, drunk by the Guaraní as an infusion, in recipients similar to gourds. With the Spanish colonization of the La Plata River this beverage became a popular consumption product throughout the entire region. In the South of Brazil this truly popular beverage is known as *chimarrão*.

¹⁶ High plateaus in the States of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina.

¹⁷ A *Vaqueria de los Pinares* established in 1721, following an agreement among the Guaraní to ensure cattle supply. Due to the indiscriminate looting carried out by the inhabitants of Buenos Aires and Santa Fé, another *Vaqueria*, known as *Vaqueria do Mar* was set up as a preventive measure to guarantee meat provision for the indigenous populations (Mörner 1985, 123).

¹⁸ *Campaña del Brasil: antecedentes coloniales (1750-1762)* (1939), vol. 2, Buenos Ayres, Guillermo Kraft, 21.

¹⁹ Arquivo Público do Estado de São Paulo, C00257, March 25, Legajo 4, 25.4.18. I would like to thank my friend and colleague Fábio Kühn for having offered me the reference to this specific document. (On the high plateaus).

²⁰ *Ibid.* (written in the language of the land)

present case that of the *cabildo*, an institution recognized by the indigenous people of the reductions. The aim of this procedure was to put an end to disputes by defining, once and for all, whose dominium that territory was under.

The presence of indigenous authorities gave this meeting the solemnity of a ceremony, even deserving of public written witnessing, and therefore demonstrating the relation between written language and power in the reductions. In other words, it was by means of written language that decisions were displayed, demonstrating what Petrucci calls 'instrumentum publicum'. Resorting to an inscription on a marker stone demonstrates both a concern with the longevity of this manner of conflict resolution as well as signalling the spreading of the usage of written language as an acknowledged way of elevating a decision to the status of a sacrament.

These brief examples are indications that, in the reductions, exposed writing performed the role of a public epigraph. In the case of the marker stone mentioned by Father Cabrera, it was also an autonomous manifestation on the part of the Guaraní, as in the instance of the crosses placed in *Cima da Serra*. Despite being a disseminated and acknowledged practice among several stakeholders, the inscriptions on these crosses were apparently carved without the Jesuits being present. In other words, it was a free initiative by the Guaraní, stating their predominance over a given territory. The written language on wood also declares and signals the willingness of the indigenous population to engage in conflict if necessary. It was a way of issuing a warning, a message of dissatisfaction stemming from the presence of trespassers.

Likewise, other variations of exposed writing were also present in mission routines, such as inscriptions on wood planks. Literate inscriptions were commonplace in various spaces and aspects of life in the reductions, acting as a powerful catechetical tool and also serving as an indicator of the place assigned to each individual within the churches, according to a shared hierarchy in mission society. We are aware of the existence of such devices due to the instructions of Father Andrés de Rada, whose recommendations were as follows:

Las tablas que se ponen en la Iglesia en que se escriben los nombres de los varones estaran en el poste inmediato a la puerta del medio y las de las mujeres junto a la puerta principal con sus señales para que sin ayuda de lectos sepa cada una donde estan su nombre, y tengase cuidado que por dicha puerta principal ni al entrar ni al salir de la Missa, Rosario etc. haya indios mirones, y para cautelar lo se valdran los P.P Curas de los Indios más temerosos de Dios, y de quienes tenga satisfacción de que seran fieles en dar cuenta de los que se desmandaren.²¹

These inscriptions inside the churches, beyond determining the physical distribution of the faithful in the congregation and establishing a designated order in accordance with Catholic precepts, also aimed to stimulate the population to identify their own names.

The expediency of displaying written words in strategic places was a widely explored practice during the first years of evangelization, which remained active in other circumstances as well, mainly due to the collective profile of many of these procedures. For instance, in order to promote general knowledge and disseminate certain prayers, such as the one intoned during

²¹ BNE (Biblioteca Nacional de España). Cervantes Room. Manuscripts. *Cartas de los P.P. Carta Comun de Andrés de Rada*, 19th of December, 1667. Sig. 6976. (The boards which we place in Church where we write the names of the men must be located right beside the middle door while the women's ones must be placed by the main door so that, without the assistance of someone who can read, every individual can know where his/her name is written, and also, to be sure that there are no surprised Indians at the doors, both while coming in or out of masses or rosary prayers, etc. And to make sure that this happens may the priests count on the most pious Indians, whom we may be certain will be capable of performing such a task).

the novena of *San Francisco Xavier*, it was recommended that the following should be put in place: ‘en una tabla de Buena letra la Oración que está trasladada de modo que según las líneas, Son las pausas que ha de hazer el Indio que la dixesse para que respondan’.²²

There is another constant feature of epigraphy in the analysed documentation, that is, of the funerary inscriptions in mission cemeteries. Nevertheless, this was not a widespread practice among all the Guaraní – it was, most likely, some sort of mode of distinctiveness in memory of the fallen, conveying acknowledged Christian criteria for such occasions. In 1760, Juan de Escandón drew up a set of notes describing spiritual and temporal aspects relating to the Guaraní way of life in the reductions, also devoting a paragraph to what he referred to as mercifulness in the preparation for death and other things. In these notes, he recorded:

sobre las sepulturas de los suyos, aunque no siempre, suelen poner su genero epitafios. Y se reduce a gravar en una pequeña tabla ò tarjeta el nombre del difunto y el año en que murió, y esta tabla la clavan en el suelo con algunos tarugos, ò de otra manera la aseguran con la misma tierra sobre la sepultura: y assi en todos los cementerios ay muchas de estas tablitas al sol y al agua hasta que ellas se pudren al cabo de pocos años.²³

The available information regarding such mortuary inscriptions points to a Christianizing of funeral practices among the indigenous inhabitants, such as identifying tombs with the names of the deceased – indigenous writing practices filled the cemeteries of the reductions with lettering. Unfortunately, due to the action of time, we do not have access to details concerning the contents of such funerary inscriptions. Only the ones carved in stone have survived, such as those engraved on the tombstones of the clergy themselves when they were buried in church crypts (Furlong 1962, 260-261). In different literate societies, various types of materials served as supports for graphic recording, such as stone, leather or wood. In the reductions, clay also performed this function; we know of its use through the traces of inscriptions or drawings found on tiles inside the Trinidad Reduction church.²⁴

3. *Prior to War, Battling Through Paper*

As mentioned, the frequent use of writing by indigenous people is a consequence of the exchange agreement reached by the Iberian monarchies. According to the terms of the Treaty of Madrid, signed in 1750, seven reductions located on the East bank of the Uruguay River – out of a total of 30 – belonging to Spain were to be handed over to Portugal in exchange for the Colônia do Sacramento. There is not a shadow of doubt that this decision reverberated powerfully in South America, stimulating communication by epistolary means. It is already known that, in that period, writing practices employed as a communication tool for political negotiation were not restricted solely to the Iberian plenipotentiaries; it was a practice used equally and widely by the indigenous inhabitants of the missions. During this period, the Guaraní wrote several texts arguing against the carrying out of demarcation work to establish new borders.

²² BNE, Cervantes Room. Manuscripts. *Cartas de los P.P. Nusdorffer*, 1735. (Oración San Francisco Xavier). Sig: 6976. (on a board, in Good hand writing, have the words of the Prayer written in such a way that by following those lines the Indians come to realize the pauses they are supposed to make, which are the cues for their replies).

²³ AHN (National Historic Archive), *Clero-Jesuitas* Section, Legajo 120, Box 3, Doc. 84, Exp 1. (On the tombstones of their beloved ones, although not always, they tend to place their sort of epitaphs. That means, engraving on a small plank or board the name of the deceased and the year of death – this board is then nailed to the ground with some dowels, or otherwise they seek to hold it with dirt itself on top of the tomb: therefore, in all cemeteries several of those boards can be found under the sun and rain until they rot away in a few years).

²⁴ Historical archaeology work in the ruins of Reduções (archaeological sites) have revealed the graphical creativity of the Guaraní in charge of the construction of the buildings (Perasso 1986).

Given that, on the one hand, indigenous leaderships attributed political value to writing as an expression of their model of self-organized governance, it must also be said that, on the other hand, the crisis, which had been triggered by the beginning of boundary demarcation works, also enabled a diversification of indigenous textual production. The 'written reaction' statements are both documents found by the demarcation commission and other texts held in South American or European archives (that is, dispersed documents with no prior indexing), as well as news and reports present in the correspondence of Jesuits dwelling in the region.²⁵

Of all the indigenous correspondence, the responses sent to the governor of Buenos Aires, José de Andonaegui, deserves special mention. When they learned of the governor's threats of war, the *cabildantes* (indigenous chiefs) wrote to him. The Guaraní called their assemblies and decided that the *cabildantes* of each reduction would reply to Andonaegui separately.²⁶ In July 1753, seven letters were written and sent to the governor, in which the chiefs expressed their own political thoughts.²⁷ The seven letters, written in the Guaraní language, are the greatest, but not the only, articulation of indigenous political views and the historical notion of the moment they were living through. These letters present similar argumentation in terms of their content and, due to their meticulous writing, they were considered by Meliá to be paradigmatic texts of the Indians' political writings (Meliá 1970).

The novelty related to an indigenous *scriptophilia* – a manifested attachment to writing on the part of the Guaraní – which was the result of an autonomous graphic expression, beyond the control which had formerly been exerted by the priests. The breach of the alliance with the Jesuits marked the emancipation of indigenous writing once it began to serve the interests of the rebellious self-governed Guaraní (Neumann 2004).

One can affirm that the indigenous mission population did frequently write, setting off a real 'battle of paper' during the period of conflicts in the region. Such documentation records several instances of indigenous rebelliousness, in a period which came to be known in historiography as the Guaraní War (1754-1756) (Golim 1998; Santos 2000; Ganson 2003; Quarleri 2005 and 2009). This finding has been invigorating inquiries into the nature of the historic relations established by the Guaraní regarding both the past and the territory affected by the land exchange. Within this context writing acquired new uses in the light of the emancipation from Jesuitical guardianship, marking the moment when it ceased to be associated with periods of exceptionality in the history of the reductions. Furthermore, the documentation which has been consulted also points to a discussion little referred to by historiography; that is, the existence of an attempt to pose a defence, through the indigenous point of view, by means of writing. In short, texts written by indigenous mission individuals – and even their related translations – are currently arousing interest in terms of their contribution to the social history of written culture.

²⁵ For a sample of this correspondence, I recommend consulting the set of documents gathered together at the AHN, *Clero-Jesuitas* Section, Legajo 120j, Dossier 7. 'Relación de lo que la Compañía de Jesus há hecho y padecido en el Paraguay en cumplimiento de las ordenes de Su magestad'; likewise, in the Simancas General Archive (Valladolid), valuable samples of Guaraní literate expertise can be found amid the letters sent from the Jesuits to the Hispanic authorities; AGS State Secretariat, Legajo 7426, Page 60. [Letter from the General Officer (*Corregedor*) of the Reduction of San Juan to the commissioner Lope Luis Altamirano (original in Guaraní and version in Spanish)].

²⁶ The letters can be consulted in the AHN, both the originals in Guaraní and the Spanish translations made at the time. AHN (Madrid), *Clero-Jesuitas*, Legajo 120, documentos: 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38. For a printed version, see Mateos 1949, 547-583.

²⁷ As seven letters were sent, they are easily associated with the so-called Seven Peoples of the Missions, however, among the eastern reductions affected by the Treaty of Madrid, the *cabildantes* of São Borja did not write any letter to the governor; one was written in the reduction of Concepción and signed only by the inspector Nicolas Ñenguiru. For an analysis of the content and idiomatic expressions contained in these letters, see Boidin and Neumann 2017.

The aforementioned letters sought to make contact with the colonial administration. They functioned as a diplomatic tool, both for making claims and for protesting, and mainly had external addressees. In this regard, indigenous correspondence moved in three main directions: some was addressed to the Hispanic authorities, in this case the demarcation commissioners as well as the governor of Buenos Aires; it was used as a means of communication between the Guaraní and the Jesuits; and it was a means of personal contact among indigenous individuals themselves.

Apparently, it was during circumstances of exceptionality – such as moments of contact with the Portuguese and in the light of the friction generated by the Treaty over boundaries – when the Guaraní felt the need to write their distress down and, whenever possible, record testimony of ephemerides. As an example, one may cite a particularly dramatic historical period when Guaraní writing activity peaked: the Iberian armies first campaign towards the mission territory in 1754.

In texts written by indigenous mission representatives, one may perceive an evident preponderance of an epistolary writing genre, both in official letters as well as in those with political-administrative content. These letters stand out as the most widely employed textual modality literate Guaraní people turned to in order to make their claims heard. Notes are a variation of such a modality of writing – recurrent in certain cases – despite not being covered by the same rules of cultivated epistolography. These messages were the means of communication between the indigenous people themselves and had a more restricted circulation.

In December 1755, a joint Iberian force advanced towards the eastern reductions, resulting in a few skirmishes with the Guaraní militia. In the following year, in the summer of 1756, one of those clashes took place. On the 7 of February, the main Guaraní leader, José Tiaraju, also known as Sepé, was riddled with bullets by a troop of soldiers under the orders of the governor of Montevideo of the time, José Joaquim Viana. After some assemblies, the Guaraní troops decided to engage the coalition army. Three days after the death of Sepé, a major clash occurred: the Battle of Caiboaté took place on Tuesday the 10 of February near Caiboaté Hill. According to the diary of Francisco Graell, a Spanish officer, the fight lasted for ‘an hour and a quarter’ (1892, 48). Approximately 1,500 Guaraní lost their lives in the battle.

4. *The Epitaph Cross Written in Guaraní*

Due to the high number of casualties at Caiboaté, one of the indigenous leaders designated the function of memory to writing. In the notes of the scribe in the service of the Lusitanian army are descriptions regarding the on-going work of the first demarcation commission. These include a statement that, in 1759, during a return expedition to the vicinity of the Battle of Caiboaté to complete the definition of the new boundaries, a wooden cross was found which carried an inscription written in Guaraní:

Año 1756. A 7 de febrero pipe omanô corregidor Jose Ventura Tiarayú Guarini pipe, sábado ramo. A 10 de Febrero pipe oya guarini guasu martes pipe, 9taba Uruguay rebeгуá 1500 soldados rebehae beiaere. Murubichá retá omanó ònga ape. A 4 de marzo pipe oyapouca ânga co Cruz marangatú. Don Miguel Mayra soldados reta upe’.²⁸

²⁸ BN/RJ, Biblioteca Nacional do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, *Continuação do Diário da Primeyra Partida de Demarcação*. Cod: 22, 1, 199 (Bound Manuscript/unpaginated). Contemporary copy. 15 Pages. (Year of 1756. On the 7 of February the General Officer [*Corregedor*] José Tiaraju died in a battle which took place on a Saturday. On the 10 of February, a Tuesday, a great battle took place where, on this very place, 1,500 soldiers and their officers died, all belonging to the 9 Peoples of Uruguay. On the 4 of March Miguel Mayra ordered the making of a cross for these soldiers).

For the Guaraní, this conflict was a major episode of warfare (*Guarini Guaçu*), given the high number of casualties among the community members, both warriors and mission leaders.

The text, a funeral narrative, had the characteristics of exposed writing (Petrucci 1999, 60). The message, written on the wood itself, was elaborated *in memoriam*, to pay homage to José Ventuta Tiarayu, known as Sepé, along with all the other soldiers and leaders (*muribichá retâ*) (Commission of Demarcation) who perished in battle. The inscription indicated, with precision, the date of Sepé's death and was 'signed' by Miguel Mayra, one of the main figures voicing the opposition of the missions. Incidentally, it must be mentioned that the identification of Sepé Tiarayu, who died in an episode prior to the Battle of Caiboaté, on the 7 of February, was only possible due to a letter, addressed to him, that was carried inside Mayra's pouch. There is not the slightest doubt that written culture was present among the Guaraní leadership, enabling both the exchange of information and the enlargement of the reach such correspondence could achieve once passed down to other indigenous community members through reading.

In the information written on the cross it is mentioned that nine reductions participated in the battle – besides the six directly involved in the exchange of territories, three additional settlements, located by the western banks of the Uruguay River, also supported the rebellious indigenous communities on the eastern side. Some reductions, although their urban nuclei were not directly affected by the Treaty, would end up losing their *ervais* and breeding land, which was located in the area affected by the exchange terms.

In this text, the mission Indians used the patterns of Western dating to record the dates of relevant events. They used the Spanish words for weekdays, though they did have words to describe days of the week in their own language, Guaraní, and they opted to inscribe the dates in the form of neologisms, as proposed by the Jesuits, to designate the seven days of the Christian calendar.

This text, spelled on a cross, is indigenous testimony of the last events on the battlefield. An epitaph written in their own language, remembering an event with a huge death toll among mission leaders. It is a record produced by a rebel indigenous Indian involved in the opposition to land demarcation, and it contains information elaborated from the viewpoint of the 'vanquished'.

Apparently, this cross fulfilled its memorial function. It was only located in April 1759, three years after its installation on the battlefield. That year, those responsible for the land exchange returned to the territory in question to complete the definition of the new borders between the Iberian monarchies in the region. It is through this information, available in the diary of the Commission of Demarcation, that we became aware of the existence of this great cross. The cross did not signal a mere epilogue to indigenous opposition, on the contrary, it was intended to pay tribute to those killed on the battlefield – a record of the many human losses through the lens of the indigenous mission inhabitants themselves.

In effect, by then, utilizing crosses with inscriptions had already been an habitual feature of life in the missions for a few decades. Undoubtedly, by resorting to this expedient in 1756, Miguel Mayra was adopting a customary strategy. Regardless of the obvious concern with how far that message could come across, this act did not serve as an epilogue to indigenous manifestations. Quite the opposite, most likely the gesture signalled the firm decision of the indigenous communities to keep on resisting.

The decision to clearly designate the territory where the battle took place, with an inscribed cross, was probably motivated by the desire to express that those human losses ought not to be forgotten. Having come to terms with the death of their main leaders, several indigenous members sustained the practice of inscribing messages on paper, leather or even wood. This strategy was adopted to clearly express the discontent of the indigenous people with the military presence of the Iberian armies in their territories.

5. *Alliances and Written Communication*

Epistolary communication remained active in the daily lives of the rebellious Guaraní even after having been defeated in Caiboaté – as evidenced by attempts to rearticulate mission activities. Sending messages back and forth was the means employed by leaders to recruit more soldiers and incentivize them to embark on new confrontations. The period between March 1756 and the occupation of the eastern reductions in May of the same year was characterized by an attempt to obstruct the march of the joint armies. As a strategy of war, the Guaraní disseminated warnings along the paths which had to be taken by the troops, messages which were regarded by the scribe in the service of the Iberian monarchies as holding ‘contenido bastante impolítico y sin ninguna sumisión’ (Graell 1892, 472).²⁹

In this sense, writing had become an instrument through which the mission elite sought to strengthen their claims and gather allies, seeking to be regarded as an autonomous protagonist in the colonial Hispanic-American world. Throughout different periods the indigenous leadership resorted to epistolary communication to inform their own comrades and even to forge relations with former rivals. In their writings they used to state that they could count on the support of the so called ‘unfaithful Indians’ – such support might have been a bluff given that they did not show up at Caiboaté, at least not to live up to the intensity announced; the assistance that was actually provided was quite discreet and non-reliable (Cabrera Perez 1989; Bracco 2004).

The theme of the support of the ‘unfaithful’ was recurrent among the Guaraní leadership and generated quite a lot of expectation regarding the arrival of soldiers who would join forces with the mission troops. On several occasions they expressed confidence in such collaboration because they believed that the mere presence of the demarcation commissions would lead to an automatic alignment of all the indigenous groups, who would then collectively revolt against the colonizers, regardless of their ethnicity or beliefs. The fact is that even after the unfortunate outcome of the Battle of Caiboaté the Guaraní leadership kept on expecting the collaboration of the ‘unfaithful’ in supporting and strengthening the mission forces. It is probable that some Guaraní leaders had kinship bonds with chiefs from indigenous communities not inclined to live in the missions. The statement of Miguel Mbaruari reveals that a mission chief named Gabriel Payaré sent word to his *Corregedor* mentioning that the ‘unfaithful’ had come to the region of San Javier. On that occasion they held a letter in their hands:

una carta escrita por los Indios de San Nicolas á los espresados Infieles para que el dicho Payare se la leyese y explicase contenia la tal carta una citación que hacian los Nicolaistas a dichos Infieles, para que viniesen abanzar este destacamento, á cuyo fin se juntaron todos.³⁰

This was about the statement of a Guaraní sending a notification regarding the despatch of a letter intended to raise support. On the one hand the deponent spoke of an attempt at co-opting, through the exchange of messages, thereby demonstrating the nexus between writing and power. On the other hand, the content of this message enables us to speculate about the scale of action of the Guaraní, taking into account the level of worth with which the written word was regarded within negotiations. After all they were familiar with receiving

²⁹ (hostile and unpolitical content).

³⁰ *Anais*, 419. (A letter, written by the Indians of São Nicolau to the aforementioned unfaithful, to be read and explained by the aforementioned Payaré, regarding the content of a letter where there was a quote, stated by the dwellers of São Nicolau to the unfaithful, calling on them to join this battalion, a request with which they all complied).

official documents – which was the method used by governors to draft mission soldiers. The fact is that the Guaraní adopted the very same procedure as the Hispanic authorities in order to seek support from allies.

The increasing proximity of the Iberian troops to the urban mission settlements determined the adoption of measures aimed at broadening the belligerent capability of the Guaraní, as a means to stand against the joint armies. It was through writing that they sought to retain an active military resistance capability against the occupation of their land and the reductions. On the 24th of March 1756 the reduction lieutenant Miguel Arayecha wrote a long letter to the *alcaide* (mayor), Simon Tiarayu, in the hope of incentivizing him to keep on resisting. In the letter he also informed Tiarayu of the latest preparations for a new attack against the combined armies and showed great confidence:

ahora despues de la averia no se les han mostrado nuestros soldados por eso estan mui confiados en si os mostrareis se han de estremecer, y temblar, y también Dios N.S los há de acovardar, por eso vosotros han de andar por San Juan y los de San Luis, San Juan y San Lorenzo, por San Lucas: tambien ya va Neenguiru a ayudarnos lleva 450 soldados el tambien os há de ayudar, no quieran desbariar en coger vacas, para comer en el Pueblo que ya las hay.³¹

Reading Arayecha's letter enables us to discern some of the military strategies used by the indigenous leaders. The first one was to halt the dispersion of soldiers. In order to achieve this goal, they worked to guarantee sufficient food provisions for the troops. The second related to keeping the existence of a Guaraní army secret, as it was believed that they would gain some advantage from this, for instance by being able to play the card of surprise when needed. Those with higher levels of confidence in the capacity of the Guaraní to mount an effective opposition remained seriously committed in standing against any movement from the joint army and, occasionally, they sent letters or placed threatening signs along the paths. At that given moment, writing offered a common identity in terms of how indigenous rebels engaged in politics by expressing their discontent with unfolding events.

The use of writing permitted a new logic in terms of how to manage conflicts and establish alliances. Writing became a form of action in the face of new challenges. The literate capability of the Guaraní put them in a position to organize their own experiences from recorded events and therefore to act in response to new challenges, functioning as a political stakeholder in the Hispanic-American world. The colonial authorities considered these indigenous reactions as a sign of hubris and insubordination. However, they were actually an expression of the autonomy of Guaraní self-governance, sustained, in turn, by the very existence of written communication among the indigenous rebels. By setting this political strategy in place they displayed confidence in the success of their claims precisely because they were taking initiatives that were in line with the colonizers' own rationale, that is, due to the fact that they were valuing *in scriptis* negotiations as much as the monarchies from the Old Regime.

³¹ AGS Secretaria de Estado, Legajo 7410 *Ynventario de los papeles que el comandante general Don Joseph Andonaegui entrego por medio de su secretario*, Document 2. (And now, after all that damage, our soldiers have not yet displayed their full might and therefore they are highly confident that when they do, their enemies will shiver and tremble, and also that our Lord will frighten them – and that is why you will walk through San Juan and San Luis, San Juan and San Lorenzo, and San Lucas: Neenguiru will assist us by bringing 450 soldiers who will also be of service to you, there is no need to go out of your way to catch cattle when there are already some available in the settlement).

6. *Indigenous Warnings and Threats: A Reencounter in May*

The body of historical information available to us indicates that, even with all these efforts, consensus was no longer feasible and some Guaraní, realizing how feeble their actual chances of standing up to the Iberian armies were, decided to abandon their positions. As a final gesture, a few of them resorted to any sort of available material to leave a warning, thereby revealing their concerns about stating their stances on the events affecting them. Desperately, they wrote brief messages on pieces of leather or wood, acknowledging the impossibility of posing resistance.

In his notes, Francisco Graell reports a warning, written on leather and located in San Fernando – an *entrepôt* of the Santo Angelo Reduction – on which the following was stated: ‘Ya nos vamos todos daos prisa a llegar a las tierras que han de ser vuestras’ (1892, 474).³² With this message those Guaraní who up until then had been firm in their decision to resist renounced their stance and acknowledged that their land would soon be occupied. There seems to be an implicit desire in this message to clearly affirm the reasoning behind their renouncement so that it did not get mistaken for defeat.

The sentiment of resentment stemming from surrendering was apparently appeased due to the fact that the occupying army was in the service of the king of Spain, the very same monarch of whom the Guaraní were vassals. Nevertheless, a quite different reaction was recorded by Jacinto Cunha, a scribe in the service of the Portuguese army. From his diary we learn of a warning on a wooden board, on which a few letters were written: ‘Vos vindes tomar nossa terras. No nos imos embora, e Deos sabe o que será’ (Cunha 1853, 277).³³

These warnings demonstrate how writing functioned both as a way of manifesting opposition and of expressing resignation before the unfolding of events, having already experienced the effects of facing one army and then another. Both warnings can be found in messages written on 2 of May 1756, when the armies marched towards the eastern reductions. The content of those messages enables us to assume that, after a few months of opposition, one of the Guaraní militia of rebel troops laid down their weapons and abandoned their will to resist while another group kept their intent and resisted. When, in the first days of May, the Iberian forces came within proximity of the San Francisco Xavier farm, they encountered a large crowd of Indians. And on 3 of May, a new confrontation occurred – the ‘reencountering’ – between the joint armies and the rebel Guaraní, at a crossing over the Chuniebi River. A mission troop tried to halt the advance of the joint armies by installing some cannons at the point where the Iberian forces intended to cross the river towards the eastern reductions. According to the records of the respective scribes, Francisco Graell and Jacinto Cunha, a significant number of indigenous troops – approximately 1,500 or 2,000 – were present.³⁴

Despite the large number of Guaraní soldiers in this new confrontation the action was compromised, in part due to their battle tactic, that is, screaming and shouting while approaching the enemy, thereby losing the element of surprise. On the same day, right after the ‘reencounter’, Christobal Eranda wrote a letter addressed to the soldiers, informing them about the latest events. The letter aimed to encourage the Guaraní soldiers to maintain their mobilization. The

³² (We are leaving, hurry up and get to the land that is to be yours).

³³ (You have come to take our land. We are not leaving, and God knows what will come about)

³⁴ According to Francisco Graell, ‘se presentaron como 1500 a 2000 indios, casi todos montados’ (1892, 475) (approximately 1500 to 2000 indigenous showed up, nearly all of them were mounted). In the notes of Jacinto da Cunha, there is no estimate of the number of indigenous troops who came to fight. He simply mentions ‘uma grande quantidade de Índios todos a cavallo, fazendo-nos cerco pela vanguarda e lado dos nossos exércitos’ (Cunha 1853, 279) (a large amount of Indians, all of them mounted, besieging our armies from the front as well as the flanks).

narrative of the latest conflicts, recorded by Eranda, tried to keep the soldiers who had left the battlefield motivated, highlighting what had been achieved:

Ayer lunes hicimos parar a los que nos aborrecen a la vuelta del camino Ybabiya, igualmente les hicimos guerra por todas partes; los Españoles murieron bastantes, y duro hasta la tarde, y Dios quizo que hacia el camino de la estancia de San Luis, llegasen los de la Cruz, y los de Yapeyu, S. Thomé y bastante de los Infeles que se pelearon contra ellos.³⁵

This letter, whose military content sought to provide the Guaraní with an assessment of their feats in battle over the previous few days, demonstrates a concern to prevent the dispersion of soldiers due to the latest casualties. The precise indication of the day on which the passage of the armies was obstructed indicates the willingness of the leadership to accurately record the news which was being spread. On the following day a fresh attempt was made to block the passage of the joint armies, with 150 indigenous troops, comprising a battalion, presenting themselves for battle. At the end of this new attempt, and this time according to a note written by the scribe Francisco Graell, there were ‘tres muertos, y entre éstos un indio de los principales de San Miguel, según una carta que se le halló’ (1892, 475).³⁶ As can be seen, the Guaraní had, as a recurrent practice, the habit of keeping their received correspondence. In general, such documents contained instructions or reports regarding the whereabouts of the soldiers. Pinpointing the reasons for carrying a letter is a complex task; nevertheless, within this particular context of expectations, amongst the reasons for doing so was the possibility of re-reading them whenever needed and also spreading news among comrades, in this way fulfilling a role of incentivizing other Indians to keep on fighting.

In the month of May, before the imminent occupation of San Miguel, Lieutenant Juachin Guaracuye, from La Cruz Reduction, drew on his literacy expertise in an attempt to reverse the course of negotiations. In a gesture of distress, he wrote a letter in the name of a group credited as ‘todos de los treinta Pueblo’.³⁷ The content of the message was addressed exclusively to the Spanish and had a threatening tone:

Nosotros hemos venido los de Yapeyu, de la Cruz, S. Thome, los de San Borja, y todos los de los Pueblos, y también todos los del Paraná. Por eso, los españoles Castellanos, apartense de los Portugueses, cuando nosotros lleguemos; para esto os escribimos, sabremos lo que determinais, nosotros no os hemos hecho nada, no queremos matar a los castellanos, a los Portugueses si, queremos consumirlos: esto és lo que hemos de hacer, y hemos de andar por aqui aunque pasen muchos años. Por eso escribidnos, para que sepamos lo que determinais.³⁸

³⁵ AGS, Legajo 7410. (Yesterday, Monday, we stopped those who hate us at the turn of the Ybabiya road, likewise we made war on all sides; the Spaniards were killed in large numbers, and the battle lasted until the afternoon, and God willed that towards the road to the ranch of San Luis, the people of La Cruz, and those of Yapeyu, S. Thomé and many of the Infidels who fought against them, arrived).

³⁶ (three casualties, and among them, one of the main indigenous leaders of San Miguel, according to a letter that has been found).

³⁷ AGS, Legajo 7410. Doc 9. (All of the thirty Pueblos).

³⁸ AGS, Legajo 7410. Document 9. Letter to Andonaegue and Zabala. 15th of May 1756. The letter was written by Theniente Juachin Guaracuye from the Pueblo de la Cruz. (We have come from Yapeyu, de la Cruz, S. Thome, also from San Borja and from all the other settlements – and there are also those of us who came from Paraná. Therefore, you, the Castilian Spanish, must set yourselves apart from the Portuguese when we arrive; that is why we write to you, so that we will know where you stand, we have not done anything, we do not wish to kill Castilians; but we do want to kill the Portuguese, we want to consume them: this is what we are going to do and we shall be around this land even after many years have passed by. That is why we write to you, to know where you stand).

The lieutenant took the opportunity to emphasize his hatred of the *Luzitanos*, pointing out a difference between both armies and channelling all the Guaraní's opposition to the Portuguese, enemies of the King of Spain and hence, invaders to be dealt with. This observation indicates the willingness of the indigenous population to preserve their bonds with the Catholic monarchy – a condition that hundreds of indigenous people broke when they accepted the offer of the Portuguese general, Gomes Freire de Andrade, changing their vassalage and settling in territory controlled by the Portuguese. After the end of the war, around 700 Indian families from the reductions were taken to the Portuguese domains and began to live in villages being formed in the far south of America (Garcia 2009).

Furthermore, within the text itself they expressed the reasons why they were writing the message and asked the Spanish to send them a written response informing them of their decision. The fact that they sustained an epistolary communication, trying to establish a negotiation with only one of the armies, highlights the strategic value granted to written words as a means to set out political negotiations with a party that they regarded as fellow subjects of Spain. To a certain degree, an agreement reached through the means of paper conferred on the literate Indians a new rationale in terms of ways to handle conflicts and establish alliances.

In the face of the experiences of intercultural contact, which took place during the demarcation works, the mission elite sought to inscribe on paper the events they had witnessed. One can perceive, through the remaining traces, that there was a remarkable willingness to write, both in terms of the amount of written production as well as the quality of the texts. Through the diversity of the texts that can be found in the written production of that time, it is possible to explore several indigenous writing modalities that took shape in the reductions. The intensifying of the negotiations cast a fresh set of expectations onto each new confrontation. These exceptional moments were considered worthy of being written down once they held the potential of being recalled.

7. *Writing and Indigenous Memory in the Reductions*

One of the functions acquired by writing, ever since its early days, has been to work as an antidote to oblivion. Since the beginning of the modern age this technology has been acclaimed as an artifice capable of overcoming the perennial nature of time itself; a resource able to reliably record past events and, therefore, establish memory – an epoch in which writing took on the role of being a faithful depository of remarkable experiences and relevant facts both for individuals and for the community.

The authors who have devoted their efforts to researching mechanisms of memory perpetuation have shed light on the importance of social games in the acts of remembering and forgetting, essential factors for the constitution of a collective identity (Halbwachs 1990; Le Goff 1996; Pollak 1989; Candau 2033). To a considerable extent, these researchers are unanimous in their view that memory, envisioned from these parameters, needs physical support and social space for its perpetuation. In this context, the attainment of writing provided the indigenous peoples in the reductions with elements to update the existence of a community, capable of remembering itself – as well as its territoriality.

Through contact with a considerable number of religious texts, used during the liturgy, the indigenous population gradually became familiar with the task of memorization once they were exposed to different modalities of writing. In colonial Paraguay it is well known that the Jesuits resorted to several methods of memorization, focusing on catechesis and making use of previous experiences in other colonial areas, such as Mexico, the Andes and Portuguese America. With these resources they sought to transmit the precepts of the Catholic faith to the indigenous population. In this way, they became acquainted with the potential of writing, enabling a new way of relating to means of remembering, which from then on was not only circumscribed within oral transmission.

We currently know that in the societies under the Old Regime the human capacity to create or establish memory was related both to writing and to images, as well as verbalized words. Nonetheless, writing is an act charged with symbolic significance, comprising the establishment of a memory of things, ideas and people through knowledge transmission. In fact, this was one of the main objectives of those who wrote in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While on the one hand such a trait is evident in the documental traces available for the work of historical investigation, on the other hand it is sensible to reflect on 'memory', as well as the actual meaning attributed to the act of remembering, and particularly the type of writing and the sorts of materials used for these recording practices.

The examined documents present evidence that the Guaraní were concerned with establishing collective memory, and consequently, gathering elements capable of promoting a sense of unity of a group before others. Every attempt to consolidate any given collective memory is a way to establish a metamemory (Candau 2003, 22). According to Jacques Le Goff, collective memory is vital for identity, be it individual or collective; nevertheless, it works not only as a conquest but also as an object of power. Societies whose social memory is mainly oral-based, or ones that are undergoing the process of erecting a writing-based collective memory, are those that best enable us to understand the struggle for the domination of recollection and tradition – that is, the very manifestation of memory (1996, 476). This situation is clearly present in the documentation produced by the indigenous inhabitants of the reductions regarding the exchange of territories.

In fact, the indigenous 'way of remembering' in the reductions, once based on music, dancing and drinking – in short, on feasting – was tremendously impacted by the dawn of writing, particularly before the possibility of a new modality to register facts, wishes and opinions. The Guaraní were in contact with countless instruction documents, from Royal Charts (which were, once in a while, mentioned by the Indians) to instructions of various kinds and lists of names drafted by the Indians to offer their services. As highlighted by Krzysztof Pomian, the accumulation of written texts since 'the invention of writing thus opens up the possibility of dissociating the past from the afterward and, consequently, of dissociating the remembrance of the past from the supra-sensorial experience which, supposedly, grants us the possibility of ascending towards it' (Pomian 2007, 183). In this context the written literacy which was taught to the indigenous population provided them with a new possibility of relating to the past, once, from then on, they shared the same codes as the colonizers, codes supported by a sociability based on memories which had been established through the 'world of text'.

In the documentation consulted for the present essay, clear evidence of such a practice can be found. I will now attempt to provide some instances in which writing played such a role. Soon after the Iberian armies occupied the urban mission settlements, records of a new text modality, which had been produced by members of the *Cabildos*, were found. As far as the habitual customs of that population were concerned, this was a new fact that possibly assisted in forging closer ties between the colonial authorities and the indigenous elite. These documents have been named *Atas de Cabildo* (Council minutes) and they were texts containing a summary of the meetings held by these urban councils.

The documents drawn up by the *cabildantes* comprised information regarding the final deliberations of each session – clearly recording the themes that were discussed. Nevertheless, from 1758 on, these documents began to present another characteristic. At that time, the Indians began to write texts presenting information which resembles a text modality that could be described as a 'summary of the facts'. According to Marcos Morinigo (1946), it is considered that the production of minutes began quite late in the reductions; indeed, when some documents with such characteristics began to be written, they recorded past events, which would indicate that, on the dates these events occurred, the members of the *cabildos* were not yet producing minutes of the sessions.

The Jesuit chronicles indicate that the mission *cabildos* had already been active, since the beginning of the seventeenth century, in sporadic sessions; however, there are no references relating to written records of such sessions prior to the early eighteenth century. Therefore, the question must be directed towards seeking to clarify why, from that moment on, the Guaraní felt the need to record these 'minutes'.³⁹

Given that they present similar themes, one may assume that the minutes were produced in response to some sort of request from the governor, while the indigenous leaders who were in office at those *cabildos* took the opportunity to further elaborate a correlation of past conflicts with other indigenous settlements.

This modality of writing was meant to inform the governor about the severity of an issue so that potential assistance against tenacious enemies would be made available thereafter. These four documents, written in 1758, demonstrate how, in that moment in time, the councillors took on writing as the chosen support to register past events, considered, by them, as being crucial – an example would be, for instance, attacks or invasions that they had suffered from nomadic indigenous groups from the Chaco.

It is always worth mentioning that the famous Treaty of Madrid, the cause of all the commotion in the region, was annulled after the completion of the demarcation work. In 1761, to be more specific, on February 12, once the Treaty of El Pardo was signed, all previous provisions were revoked. This new treaty consisted of just three articles rendering null and void the Treaty of Madrid that had been signed in 1750. Everything went back to being exactly as it was before the arrival of the demarcation commissions on the La Plata river. Nonetheless, even after the annulment of the exchange Treaty, the trust once bestowed upon the Jesuits remained shattered.

In this new context, the governor of Buenos Aires took the initiative of consulting the members of the *cabildos* about the military personnel of each one of the reductions, inquiring about how many men – and weapons – would be available. The positions taken by the indigenous leaders signalled an understanding of the power changes introduced into the 'places of power' as a result of the events that unfolded after the Treaty of Madrid. It is noticeable that the writing of documents assumed another pattern, indicating a new format of written communication established with the colonial administration. The indigenous members of these *cabildos* began to respond, in writing, to orders or queries received from the governor of Buenos Aires.

Reports were then prepared in response to the consultation, detailing the particular information that had been requested, although some information was also added about the presence of relatives from the eastern reductions – the coexistence with whom was a vivid reminder to several indigenous members of previous conflicts that had taken place on the land involved in the exchange. The very mention of these *agregados* (relatives) indicates how deeply the incorporation of new inhabitants, particularly those relatives, had altered the routine of some of the reductions. Let us look at an example: in the response sent by the Reduction of Santa Maria Maior in 1761 to a consultation carried out by the governor of Buenos Aires, inquiring about the number of men and weapons available, at the end of the document there is an annotation, with specific information 'Del aggregate Pueblo de San Lorenzo'. In that text they affirm that 'Pero debemos confesar Señor Exlmo, que estando para armar à toda esta gente, nos van sacando

³⁹ In this set, there are four texts written in 1758 containing records of the events which had taken place in the past decades, in the form of an overview. These documents comprise the *corpus* of documents in Guaraní (some of them with their respective translation into Spanish), which is held at the Mitre Museum / Buenos Ayres (MM/BA): *Colección de documentos en idioma Guaraní correspondiente a los Cabildos indígenas de las misiones jesuíticas del Uruguay desde el año 1758 al 1785*. Reference 14/8/18.

gemidos los alborotos passados'.⁴⁰ While undertaking the task requested by the governor the act of writing contributed to evoking sore memories which were the outcome of years of open conflict. This fact may explain the willingness of the indigenous leaders to collaborate with the governor, even when they did not have many men or proper weapons to contribute.

It is worth noting that, on this occasion, the indigenous Indians adopted a diametrically opposed stance to the previous one and were now unrestrictedly collaborative. They were, most likely, interested in ensuring a positive relationship with the colonial authorities, seeking to prevent the outbreak of any sort of conflict. These drafts also provide us with an opportunity to assess the dexterity and the familiarity of literate Guaraní in writing texts addressed to the outside world, whether through the way they organized information, emphasizing aspects of bookkeeping – the number of soldiers, for instance – or through their textual replies, objectively and punctually complying with orders that had been received. These are texts that reveal how writing was put to several types of use by the mission population in the Jesuit Province of Paraguay.

8. *Final Remarks*

Looking into primary documentation certifies the extent to which written culture reveals a determinate system of values and behaviours in a given epoch, representing a gauge of how far the imagination had been colonized. The strategic uses to which writing was put sought to sustain some level of unity in the actions carried out by the Guaraní and to support their self-governance. Therefore, the indigenous perspective was recorded through the initiatives of the elite and their efforts in the realm of political negotiation, and by doing so, they bequeathed to posterity an indigenous version of that period of conflict. The different documents seized – comprising a tiny fraction of the entire set of indigenous documents – demonstrate organizational and negotiation attempts by the Guaraní and make it clear that their claims could indeed be championed, through written evidence, in records attesting to the services rendered to the King, as subjects and vassals of Spain.⁴¹

On any feasible occasion the indigenous population of the reductions referred to their bond with the Spanish monarchy, pointing out that their *ñande reko* (way of being) was necessarily permeated by their insertion in the values and behaviour of Hispanic-American society. A process of missional ethnogenesis was underway, conjuring up an identity for the Guaraní who had been 'reduced' to Christian life (Wilde 2009). Within this context the impact of literacy promoted a new sociability, establishing channels of interaction with colonial society.

In fact, the familiarity manifested by some Indians when exposed to different textual formats was a factor which influenced new uses for their graphic expertise, broadening the possibilities in favour of more personal and direct relations with the world of texts and rendering the presence of intermediaries unnecessary.⁴² One may affirm that the changes observed on how to conduct negotiations were a result of the lengthy coexistence of these indigenous Indians with literate practices, mainly from the eighteenth century onwards.

⁴⁰ MM/BA: Colección de documentos en idioma Guaraní correspondiente a los Cabildos indígenas de las misiones jesuíticas del Uruguay desde el año 1758 al 1785. Reference 14/8/18. (We must confess, your Excellency, that while we are about to arm all these people, past grievances make us groan).

⁴¹ There is a detailed study of this event in South American history, focusing on the mobilization of the indigenous population in the reductions based on the notion of an 'insurrectionary ideology' (Quarleri 2009).

⁴² According to Roger Chartier: 'The greater a person's familiarity with writing, the more emancipated he was from traditional ways of life, which bound the individual tightly to his community and made him dependent on others to read and interpret the divine word and the commandments of his sovereign' (1991, 119).

The examined documentation indicates that writing became of greater importance during the crisis generated by the Treaty of Madrid, a moment in time when it was effectively used as a means of communication among indigenous rebels struggling to coordinate joint actions. We are therefore in the presence of a modality of political writing expressing genuine political reasoning – in Guaraní – before the then ongoing territorial transformation.

Over and above the clear political dimension of indigenous writing it must be mentioned that it also sought to meet another end, that is, safeguarding key information by recording facts which had been considered the most relevant – a circumstance for which writing acted as a memory archive, influencing both the survival of memories as well as defining what ended up being forgotten, but also presenting a new possibility to narrate those events. In this respect, the texts which had been elaborated by the Guaraní, regardless of their modality of support, have indeed produced a legacy, granting to posteriority information that enables us to establish a version of these episodes in the light of the indigenous standpoint.

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Women Building the Colonial Archive Legal Authority, Female Knowledge and Affective Mobility in the Sixteenth-Century Iberian Atlantic World

Juan Manuel Ramírez Velázquez
Colgate University (<jramirezvelazquez@colgate.edu>)

Abstract

In the sixteenth century, the transition from medieval unity to an expansionist state brought broader legal access and the bureaucratization of the Spanish Empire, leading to a diversified legal engagement among social groups. This backdrop is crucial in understanding how women from various backgrounds utilized the legal system. The article examines a set of letters (1560-1562) written by a Spanish widow to her son in Mexico and three judicial cases (1552, 1561, 1569) filed by transatlantic white women of different socioeconomic statuses, all seeking economic improvement. Through these examples, the article explores how these women navigated the legal system using what I have called affective mobility in early modernity, employing emotional, rhetorical, and narrative strategies. Their stories, mirroring popular chronicles, challenged the male-dominated legal sphere. The article highlights the prominent role of women in the colonial archive, intertwining their experiences with men's, demonstrating their use of personal details and honorable depictions for legal and economic benefits.

Keywords: Affective Mobility, Atlantic World, Colonial Archive, Early Modern Women, Spanish Widowhood

1. Introduction

In the early modern period, women in the Spanish Empire lived in a volatile, ever-changing world. While they have been traditionally positioned as caretakers of private spaces, specifically the home and the convent, the examination of archival sources that include non-elite women (peasants, workers, and poor) establishes women's mobility in the public sphere.¹ These sources

¹ Among many other studies, see Gonzalbo Aizpuru 2005; Mangan 2005; Graubart 2007; Lipsett-Rivera 2012; Schlau 2013.

– including letters, legal testimonies, wills, and other judicial documents – have revealed that women, and especially non-elite women, occupied different roles in the early modern period and were not always by men's side.² They became active and adaptable agents of a nascent early modern society embedded in economic exchanges and the search for better futures, aligning with the broader narratives of the Spanish Empire's expansion and its relentless pursuit of labor, land, and gold. As such, women of the time took part in economic transactions and sought out opportunities for better futures. They migrated, moved, and created knowledge. Importantly, they documented their experiences and movements, thereby producing and sharing what I call a female discourse of mobility.

The study of women's social and economic mobility historically has yielded demographic data that illustrate their migration patterns, revealing their significant presence on the earliest voyages to the Americas, including those with Columbus.³ Women traveled in smaller numbers than men, yet social historians have argued that they fulfilled important duties, especially the preservation of Catholic family traditions and values as exemplars of virtue (Lavrin 2008, 324).

Bearing this historical context in mind, the purpose of this article is to analyze women's archival narratives through the lens of mobility as a reconceptualized complex theoretical and literary construct. This approach sheds light on the complex interconnected lives of women whose experiences of and with movement have ample implications for the construction of the early modern Spanish Empire and colonial Latin American society. The narratives of non-elite women that I examine in this article provide a distinctive view of their struggles and dislocations. These stories contribute to the perpetuation of collective memories during a transitional period from medieval unity to an early modern expansionist state. In this sense, the reconfiguration of gender norms along with the insertion of women in the worlds of *letters*⁴ and other male-dominated spaces are intrinsically connected to the roots of what José Antonio Maravall defines as the Baroque. Women's depictions of the expanding world reflect the Baroque's clash of traditional and modernizing tendencies; these tensions arose as social mobility, geographical displacement, and transatlantic economies presented extraordinary challenges to 'maintain[ing] medieval lifestyles' within Spanish society(ies) (1981, 175). While the Baroque is often associated with the seventeenth century, the expansion of the legal system since the late fifteenth century indicates an earlier onset of this cultural shift, as evidenced by the increasing significance of textual production in daily life.⁵

The primary objective of this article is to investigate the experiences of common Spanish or criolla women within the world of *letters* and imperial knowledge, focusing specifically on how they represented their own mobility and that of others. Here, 'mobility' refers not just to physical movement but also to social and cultural shifts, serving as a lens to understand the female subjectivities in early modern Spain. This perspective, influenced by Adey's concept of mobility as an 'animating theoretical category' (2017, 36), illuminates how these women's

² See, for example, Jaffary and Mangan 2018. For diverse analyses of first-person narrated texts by noble women, particularly from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, I recommend the works of Mónica Bolufer. One notable example is her study, 'Textos escurridizos: a propósito de la escritura personal femenina en la época moderna' (2019).

³ Among the various examples, see two monograph studies by Ida Altman 1989 and 2000.

⁴ For an insightful exploration of how women empowered themselves in the creation of texts, see Díaz and Quispe-Agnoli 2017.

⁵ In *Esclavos de la ciudad letrada: esclavitud, escritura y colonialismo en Lima (1650-1700)*, J. R. Jouve Martín explains that official institutions such as the Inquisition and other legal infrastructures resulted in the proliferation of letters and writing among the populations of the Americas (2005, 69). Additionally, he emphasizes that non-traditional texts and the New Literacy Studies are allowing interdisciplinary scholars to access marginalized voices (14).

journeys across the Atlantic and their lives in a transatlantic world shaped their experiences and narratives. Central to this use of mobility is the role of customs and collective memory, which, as Andy Wood suggests, are not merely implicit knowledge but actively discussed and integral to people's understanding of their identity and place in society (2013, 94). These customs, deeply rooted in the Catholic empire, became a means for women to navigate, challenge, and sometimes subvert the dominant patriarchal system. The narratives of mobility, therefore, do more than recount physical movements; they reveal how women engaged with and influenced the social and legal structures of their time. By examining these narratives, we gain insight into how women used their experiences and the language of custom to legitimize what Wood defines as 'popular claims' within the legal system (12). This approach helps us understand the role of women in the socio-cultural transformations that marked the shift from medieval to early modern society, highlighting their contributions to the evolving colonial infrastructure and gender dynamics.

To establish a robust transatlantic framework for this article, I emphasize the cases of early modern Spanish women connected to the Americas through their literary and legal records. These cases are united by two factors: the women are all widows, and they tell their own stories in writing. Widowhood in this context is a complex concept. The literature of the time, especially in moralist and indoctrinating works, often portrays widows as morally depraved individuals, whose sexuality threatens the patriarchal order due to their rejection of remarriage. These women are depicted as transgressing norms, seeking freedom in both domestic and public realms. This ideology, aimed at enforcing male dominance, permeates various mediums, from dictionaries like the *Diccionario de Autoridades*, to plays such as *La viuda valenciana* by Lope de Vega, and even legal codes. However, folklore and popular literature's broad portrayal contrasts with the diverse representations found in archives and non-canonical sources. These reveal the unique subjectivities of widowed women, showing that each widow's story differs significantly. As multifaceted individuals, their writings not only highlight the privileges and agency they gained post-widowhood but also prompt a reevaluation of their daily lives, actions, representations, and language. In this context, I analyze stories of individual widows, demonstrating how they utilized their agency and knowledge in letters and judicial requests.

This article is divided into four sections: I first propose a new theoretical framework combining affect theory and mobility to uncover the impact of female mobility regarding the early modern and colonial socioeconomic system. Then, I closely examine a set of letters (1560-1562) written by Catalina de Ávila, a Spanish widowed woman residing in the Iberian Peninsula, addressed to her son who left for the New World. In contrast, I study three judicial cases filed by Isabel de Caballos (1552), Ana Segura (1561), and María de Vitoria (1569), three transatlantic women of different socioeconomic statuses, all of whom were seeking to improve their economic situations. I end this article with a brief conclusion that highlights some of the main ways in which female subjects exploited and penetrated the Spanish legal system through affective, rhetorical, and narrative mechanisms.

2. Sixteenth-Century Women's Affective Mobilities

The goal of this article is to expand the traditional understanding of mobility, historically seen as physical movement through space or as synonym of migration (Corbeil 2019, 24),⁶ to a more nuanced "ongoing" nature of mobility' (Hernández Sau and Eissa-Barroso 2022, 336). This the-

⁶ See also Lucassen and Lucassen 2009.

oretical framework also includes emotional, metaphorical, and material dimensions, particularly in the context of early modern Spanish women. In this sense, I pay particular attention to how early modern widowed women ‘gave meaning to their own movement and how they embodied practices of continued motion’ (335) in a transatlantic discourse.⁷ Scholars like Chelsea Maude Avirett have redefined medieval mobility as a deliberate act to navigate, manipulate, or subvert societal constraints (2013, 4).⁸ This reframing is pivotal in understanding how women of the Spanish Empire utilized mobility not just as a physical act but as a multifaceted tool to engage with their rapidly changing world and meet their socioeconomic objectives.

Early modern women of the Spanish Empire provide unique discursive examples to rethink mobility by closely looking at their affective, cultural, and everyday exchanges. Here, mobility is understood not only as a form of movement, but as a concept that re-situates how women conceived of and created their new early modern, transatlantic, or colonial environment and what they sought to gain from them. Through their mobility, they engaged with other people who, in most cases, would have had similarly mobile experiences. Nora Jaffary and Jane Mangan ably argue that ‘Primary sources of the era reflect the pervasive nature of mobility and migration’ (2018, xv). However, their exploration of these concepts primarily addresses the literal movement, especially focusing on women’s migration from the peninsula to the Americas. In contrast, my work not only examines the physical movements of early modern women – either seeking to travel to the Americas or connected to the ‘new land’ through male heads of household residing in those territories – but also delves into their figurative or reimagined movements. This includes the narration of other’s actions and their impact on the women, as well as the emotions expressed in their discourse, which shaped their subjective experiences and primary objectives. Thus, the term ‘affective mobilities’ in my framework refers to gestures, sensations, and movements that translate into rhetorical strategies in women’s narratives. This theoretical approach creates a space to analyze women’s transatlantic inquiries and stories more deeply, considering how they ‘crafted’ their narratives by ‘forming, shaping, and molding elements’ (Davis 1987, 3).

In this article, I explore mobility through the lens of affect theory in a combination of documents of different genres authored by or written about women. Most of these texts, even the personal epistles that I study in this article, are legal documents organized through a legal framework. The texts I examine, which are at once conversational yet structured, quotidian yet formal, speak to and for a purpose.⁹ Sara Ahmed’s concept of ‘orientation’ helps illuminate how these women’s perceptions and actions were shaped by their environment and societal norms (2006, 1). A key focus is how widowed women leveraged the locations and accomplishments of their husbands and sons in the New World to petition authorities for resources. These petitions highlight a contrast: while they emphasize the mobility of their male relatives overseas, they also draw attention to their own immobility in the Iberian Peninsula. Furthermore, these women skillfully used the merits of their husbands to construct a narrative that links their identity to various forms of (im)mobility. They argued that the accomplishments of their husbands entitled

⁷ These authors base their definition of mobilities on the work of Tim Cresswell (2010). They explain Cresswell’s argument, noting that ‘Cresswell argues that mobility is determined by three relational moments: the motion itself, the representational strategies associated with the self-presentation of mobility, and the embodiment of moving’ (Hernández Sau and Eissa-Barroso 2022, 335).

⁸ In the same line of methodology see Savo 2021.

⁹ I draw vital insights from Arnold Berleant, who states that ‘literature arises out of language that is activated by being spoken’. Precisely because these texts are performative, they are also real, providing ‘shifts in ideas, weak transitions, lame inferences, strings of trivialities, or fuzzy ideas’ (1973, 340).

them to compensation, which in turn would grant them the freedom to move. This strategic use of affective and rhetorical elements in their narratives is a central aspect of my analysis and understanding of ‘affective mobilities’. By examining judicial documents, I extract biographical information and analyze forms of discourse that go beyond historical data. This literary analysis of the documents reveals a wealth of persuasive, emotional, and logical strategies employed by these women. They not only sought socioeconomic advantages but also navigated their struggles, dislocations, and displacements in a period marked by shifting socioeconomic structures.

Taking affect as a theoretical concept alongside mobility permits us to understand and categorize emotions and subjective experiences based on the role that they play in our lives and in the lives of others through various interactions. In *The Affect Theory Reader*, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth argue that ‘Affect marks a body’s *belonging* to a world of encounters or; a world’s belonging to a body of encounters’ (2011, 2). Here, while difficult to define, affect is more than just emotion; rather, it is the subjective experience of individuals in multi-directional relationships between bodies, objects, and the larger world. Through emotions, sensations, and sensibilities, we become part of a world that is constantly changing and that is itself impacted by these emotions. Affect facilitates understanding of how we as individuals are constantly changing, or, in Gregg and Seigworth’s words, our ‘body [is] perpetual *becoming*’ (3).

Studying affect in literature thus enables an exploration of the nuanced interplay between individual subjectivity and historical context. Although fully recreating individual experiences is impossible, analyzing affect offers insights into how people interact within their environments and are shaped by them. A critical concept here is ‘becoming’, as described by Sara Ahmed: we engage with spaces by physically occupying them, thereby reshaping them and ourselves in the process (2006, 11). In this project, focusing on the early modern period, Ahmed’s idea takes a metaphorical form. The spaces women occupied were transformed by their presence and actions. The case studies in this article exemplify how women, particularly those of non-elite status, navigated and altered the patriarchal and gendered spaces of their time. Despite being restricted from public spaces and the legal system, they found ways to assert their agency and improve their socioeconomic standing. Their actions challenged and disrupted established gender roles – of women, wives, nuns, and mothers – not just metaphorically through their emotional expressions but also literally in their written texts. These women’s stories captivate us not only as historical narratives but also as instances of contesting and transforming societal norms.

Ahmed further argues that in order to inhabit a space, ‘orientation devices’ are essential (*ibid.*). These devices are ‘ways of extending bodies into spaces that create new folds, or new contours of what we could call livable or inhabitable space’, emphasizing that ‘orientation is about making the strange familiar’ (*ibid.*). In this sense, these women who are looking for material compensation, royal salaries, or licenses to journey to the Americas, utilized not only their intellect, but also their social networks and the reconstruction of stories. They used their neighbors’ knowledge, their extended families’ resources, and information from daily encounters with other women, as infinite opportunities to demand returns of husbands and sons, secure financial support, and hold officials accountable. Judicial texts further show that these women’s efforts extended beyond family advocacy, indicating their pursuit of personal advancement. Thus, ‘affective mobilities’ in this context encapsulate the various strategies these women used to maneuver within and impact their socio-cultural surroundings, offering a nuanced view of their roles and aspirations in the early modern period.¹⁰

¹⁰ This theoretical framework is further developed in Ramírez Velázquez 2023.

3. *Female Affective Mobilities: From La Mancha to Mexico City*

The letters compiled by Rocío Sánchez Rubio and Isabel Testón Núñez in *El hilo que une* (1999) present the abundant transatlantic correspondence between Spanish individuals in the Old and New Worlds. These letters are drawn from inquisitorial cases concerning the heretical act of bigamy at the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City. This edited volume shows the receptors' understanding of these letters across the Atlantic, which present unique perspectives for studying the colonial period. The letters transcribed in this volume provide an opportunity to delve into the lives of women who struggle to function in the Spanish peninsular society.

From economic difficulties in maintaining their lands and houses and paying their daughters' dowry, to lack of defense in lawsuits and legal endeavors, women's actions and movements are not always aligned with the gender norms of this time. In order to prevail and create a home without a husband, father, or brother, women regularly took on more responsibilities after suffering from economic deficit when a husband was gone for years, abandoning them. Following Amos Megged's methodology to study single women in colonial Mexico, I examine women's affective discourses 'not from the dichotomist approach of "resisters" versus "subordinators", but rather from a far more multifaceted vantage point that takes into account internal factionalism ... as well as shifting roles' (2019, 31). Women's forms of resistance in these letters illustrate how they move beyond their assigned gender roles as means for achieving various objectives.

Men who went to the Americas in conquests or other endeavors for the Crown usually sought a better future for themselves and their families in the peninsula. By law, husbands were required to ask for licenses for their peninsular wives to bring them to the Americas after the second or third year.¹¹ However, it was common for husbands to overlook the complicated situation of their Spanish families and continue their lives in the newly conquered territories, often creating new families and new homes. On the other hand, other male heads of household, such as the eldest sons, did not have to follow any regulations regarding their mothers or sisters. The creation of new domestic arrangements in the Americas meant that these men were able to remarry without the dissolution of their first marriage. In these cases, men committed bigamy, and even though these cases were judged under secular and civil law, the Inquisition redefined their authority in the sixteenth century and understood the 'excesses' within marriage and sexuality as part of their jurisdiction.

While men committed far more bigamy offenses than women, both genders are protagonists of inquisitorial cases in the Iberian Peninsula and colonial Latin America.¹² As previously established, these epistolary letters were originally found in Mexican inquisitorial cases in which subjects were charged with the crime of bigamy. These texts form part of the hundreds of pages that compose these documentary trials in the archive and serve as proof to support the defendant or plaintiff's case. The crime of bigamy complicates the conceptualization of not only the sexual and marital lives of early modern people but also their socioeconomic situation. Satoko Nakajima explains that bigamy has been defined historiographically from the perspectives of the elite, who wanted to institutionalize marriage ('binding the tie authorized by the Church') and over-control marriages because bigamy 'was nothing but illegally binding an unauthorized one' (2021, 78). Nakajima instead shows how, in the sixteenth century, non-elite Spanish individuals navigated the strict post-Tridentine marriage regulations, exploiting legal loopholes or adhering to enduring cultural practices that permitted remarriage (105). Richard Boyer, in his

¹¹ AGI, 'Registros Generalísimos', Indiferente, 427, 54-56.

¹² For detailed historical information on this topic, see Boyer 1995.

study of bigamists in colonial Mexico, also highlights that ‘personal associations, more than the formal institutions of church and state, shaped daily life in colonial Mexico’ (1995, 1). These statements depict a nascent society in which the official regulations do not apply as expected when understood through the lived experience of the non-elite. In this case, as Wood has ably demonstrated, ‘the local remained the central locus of popular memory throughout the early modern period’ (2013, 12). In the following sections, I demonstrate how mobility serves as a means to understand collective memory: the emotions, actions, and movements of non-elite communities and individuals who are constantly searching for new ways to inhabit unfamiliar spaces via their incorporation into the economies of the Iberian-Atlantic world.

In 1560, Catalina de Ávila wrote from Almodóvar del Campo, in Castile, to her son Gonzalo de Ávila, who had been residing in Mexico (either Mexico City or Zacatecas in Mexico, as Ávila doubtfully explains in her letter) for approximately eighteen years. This middle-aged widowed woman desperately awaits an answer to her letters from her son as her state and family face serious social and economic challenges. From what she has heard around Almodóvar del Campo and the Mancha region, Catalina knows that only her son, who became wealthy during his journeys and conquests in Mexico, can help her overcome the household’s economic challenges. This widowed woman is worried about the future of her family, and thus she asks her affluent son to send her money along with the answers to her letters, because she wants to read personally, from his handwriting, about his current socioeconomic position in the Americas, and about his health.

Rich with Catholic references and common praises to God, implying the epoch’s cultural standard and connections with the Church as the institution that governed society, Catalina’s letters shed light on women’s societal role, as their position and even political location recenters when the male figure is not present. In specific early modern narrations like Catalina’s letters, women are clearly portrayed as the head of household with an authoritative tone that demands actions and solutions. However, women like Catalina seem to reach out to men for help, especially economic help. In the cases analyzed here, women are orientated to guard their families at any cost, as a family was what provided an indispensable structure to Catholic society. To find solutions, women used what surrounded them to achieve their goals. The forms of mobility Catalina exploits in her letters can be divided into different forms that complement each other: physical movement to find a scribe to write the letter and send the letter with a trustworthy acquaintance; metaphorical movements and actions to provide the necessary contexts to the recipient of the letter without implying or discovering information that could put her or her son in jeopardy; and socioeconomic mobility that portrays her as both resourceful and in need of resources. These forms of mobility enable space to conceptualize emotions and affection through Catalina’s own un/gendered actions.

Although there probably are around eight to ten letters in total from Catalina to her son in Mexico, only four are accessible in *El hilo que une*, starting with ‘Carta 5: Catalina de Ávila, desde Almodóvar del Campo, a su hijo Gonzalo de Ávila en la Ciudad de Méjico o en Zacatecas. 1560’ (Sánchez Rubio and Testón Núñez 1999, 45). From the beginning of her letters, Catalina portrays the connection between her family’s economic difficulties and the lack of male figures in her household. Catalina’s husband had died five years before, and her sons are all away from home or unreachable. From this perspective, Catalina’s petition and worldview can be understood as complying with the patriarchal system, even enforcing and reproducing it. However, her text and rhetoric hold unique ways to understand the daily life of a woman struggling for money, and the affective mobilities which shape her surroundings and her mindset.

As is commonly the case with early modern correspondence, Catalina de Ávila starts her letter ('Carta 5'), by praying and thanking God for taking care of her son. Religious imagery in these letters aligned with the concept of literary performance (Berleant 1973, 339), as this language highlights the clear connection between literary devices and public religious performances such as the inquisitorial *autos de fe*. In these public spectacles, people – often women and subaltern groups – repented from their sins to provide an example for the rest of the population. *Autos de fe* illustrate the early modern Spanish culture of 'penitence and justice – consisting of the ritual of public penance of condemned heretics and the implementation of imposed sentences –' (Boyle 2014, 6). In the case of these letters, women use this rhetoric as a strategy to safeguard their social positions as female subjects by adhering to the gendered moral values of early modern Spanish life. These descriptive narrations depict women's possibilities to persuade, push and stretch, and move within gender norms. Metaphorically and to a certain extent physically, Catalina's persuasive literary moves can be compared to the queen in a chessboard; she can make almost any move, but there are limitations that can be defeated by careful scrutiny.

Immediately after emphasizing her proximity to feminine virtue and hegemonic gendered expectations, Catalina explains that, while she awaits her son's news from the New World, she knows that he is 'Bueno, y bien quieto, y rico y honrado' (Sánchez Rubio and Testón Núñez 1999, 45),¹³ words that also sustain her son's honor as a person of *calidad*. A person of *calidad* literally means a person of 'quality'. With this in mind, the *calidad* of any person identifies what a person is worth through an understanding of the family's background and ties to meritorious acts for the Crown, their socioeconomic status, and also their racial, ethnic, and cultural identities. In this case, Gonzalo's *calidad* was transferred from his family, specifically from his father, who probably was a *cristiano viejo* and took part in battles for the Crown in the Americas. A *cristiano viejo* refers to a person whose family and antecedents were Christian before the Catholic Monarchs imposed Catholicism as the hegemonic religion in the Iberian Peninsula. Taken together, these aspects of Gonzalo's identity are clearly a means to present himself as a *vecino* (good citizen) before the authorities.¹⁴ Furthermore, his *calidad* also affects his family, especially his mother, who is looking for economic advantage. While *calidad* is a concept broadly used in sixteenth-century documents and also studied in secondary sources, this term is complex. Archival legal documents illustrate that this term gradually loses its traditional meaning as the empire expands and more non-elite people obtain access to civil and religious bureaucracy and rewards through their actions and economic status rather than their family lineage.¹⁵

Along with the references to the dangers of losing the family's *calidad*, in the first paragraph of Catalina's letter there is also evidence of exchanges of information between the Americas and the peninsula at that moment. While Catalina highlights how she wishes to know about her son since he left the village, she simultaneously explains that she has not 'cesado de preguntar a unos y a otros, y nadie me ha dado razón. Y de un mes a esta parte ha sido Dios servido que he sabido lo que digo' (45).¹⁶ In the 'Carta 6', Catalina also expresses how she has constantly

¹³ (Kind, and calm, and wealthy and honored). All translations from primary sources are my own.

¹⁴ *Vecino* means that the person holds citizenship within a community. Citizenship or *vecinidad* provided certain rights and privileges to its citizens.

¹⁵ The word *calidad* is used comprehensively within archival documents, but petitioners often ask for rewards stating that they should get these benefits or rewards regardless of their *calidad*.

¹⁶ (ceased to ask around town, but no one has given [her] any information. And for a month now, God has been served with [her] requests).

inquired about her son's location and condition: 'He trabajado por saber del suceso de vuestra salud y trato muchos días ha, y no ha sido con poco trabajo para mí la dilación de respuesta de vuestra parte' (47).¹⁷ Embedded within her emotional tone, these statements demonstrate the continuous and abundant flow of oral, and implicitly written, information between the Americas and the peninsula during the sixteenth century.¹⁸ While scholars have defined the eighteenth century as the key moment in which postal correspondence became institutionalized (Moreno-Cabanillas 2021, 473) the sixteenth century marks the beginning of transatlantic exchanges of news. In the same vein, the oral communication of information also dramatically increased, as all kinds of passengers arrived and departed from both sides of the Atlantic on a daily basis.

In her letters, Catalina speaks of what she has heard in her surroundings, her neighbors, family, friends, and acquaintances. She emphasizes the relationship between her actions as a good Catholic and God's rewards in the form of answers to her questions. However, she specifically refers to the many sources that not only provide information to her, but also confirm her conjectures about her son's location. As Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham have argued, news in Early Modern Europe was 'more efficiently ... transmitted in person than in manuscript or in print, and many forms of written news sought not so much to be the first source of information as to confirm, correct, contextualise or reconfigure news which was already circulating orally' (2016, 2). Catalina's letters show that oral communication created networks that allowed everyone in town to be aware of most emigrants' whereabouts. In this specific case, through Catalina's rhetorical skills, this document shows how women shrewdly moved between different spaces to find information and accomplish their goals. As Catalina herself metaphorically expresses by acknowledging her agency and capabilities to decipher her world, 'he sentido tan gran grande alteración de placer que quisiera como pájaro volar a veros' (Sánchez Rubio and Testón Núñez 1999, 45).¹⁹ Catalina is not only relieved because her son is doing well personally and economically, but also content since she was able to find this information. Catalina's description reveals that 'Mobilities mean societies are interlinked by the mobilities of peoples and things' (Adey 2017, 10). Her (im)mobility as she awaits her son is an example of collective mobility with unique affective motifs. She realizes that her identity as a woman has mutated to become a person who is now able to equip herself with the necessary information in all spaces. The acknowledgment of her new agency is ultimately substantiated by observing that she will see her son once again before she dies.

Catalina's literary performance does not exclusively portray her ability to move and access a masculine world of exchanges, trade, and power. It additionally illustrates her own rhetorical flourish embedded in a discourse of pity that resonates with her miserable conditions. Her own outlook can be viewed as shaped by the economic difficulties that affect her whole family, and therefore her literary identity is influenced by this fact. While Catalina highlights that she became a widow because of her sins, further accentuating her Catholic guilt and the repentant culture of the time, the connections between God's aims and her own financial requests are another essential characteristic of her literary expression:

¹⁷ (I have been trying for many days to know your health condition, but the delay in your response has been hard for me to understand).

¹⁸ Renate Pieper argues that the Iberian Peninsula's geopolitical location was recognized as perfect for commerce as it connects the Mediterranean Sea with the rest of oceans and continents (2016, 497).

¹⁹ (I have felt such an enormous wave of pleasure that I would like to fly like a bird to come and see you).

Bien creo habéis sabido cómo, por mis pecados, yo estoy viuda, que ha cinco años, el día de San Andrés de este año, que murió vuestro padre. Sabe Dios con cuanta necesidad y deudas me dejó, y son tantas y tan grandes que fue menester lo que dejó, y no bastó para pagarlas. (Sánchez Rubio and Testón Núñez 1999, 45)²⁰

Once more, Catalina strategically positions herself as a destitute miserable woman whose sins caused her to lose her husband. She is embracing the Catholic doctrine of penance, using words that craft vivid, performative images, making the reader feel her pain, albeit perhaps overstated. By adopting this discourse of anguish and sorrow, Catalina provides a definition of widowhood that is clearly distanced from the power and accessibility women acquired when their husbands died from non-criminalized causes. As her letters demonstrate, Catalina's responsibilities expanded by incorporating a care-taking task beyond the private space of the home. In doing so, Catalina not only presents herself as a figure of misery but also transcends the confines of her traditional domestic role. By narrating her husband's and son's movements and activities, she granted herself the authority to step beyond the boundaries typically set by her gender roles in conventional marriage. Her epistle is meticulously structured to showcase her new-found responsibility for her family's honor and standing, transcending the limitations of her prescribed gender roles.

Catalina's principal mode of description is highly detailed narration: she narrates using sensory features that transfer her emotions to the reader. She describes what she and her family experience and see through their own eyes, but also what the future might bring to them if they don't find additional resources. Her intentions are influenced by the economic arrangements of the time. Catalina's problems, while structured in writing through Catholic dogma, are indeed economic; a good economy is what brings honor and prosperity to the family. In this sense, Catalina postulates one of the most important matters for her family: the complicated situation of her daughter, Isabel de Ávila, who had been married recently, but Catalina has not complied with the stipulated economic agreement with the groom. Catalina explains: 'Y sobre todas mis penas no tengo otra mayor que de vuestra hermana Isabel de Ávila, que quisiera yo tener mil ducados que darle en casamiento, que la tengo casada con un hombre muy honrado, que es Fabián Sánchez, hijo de Alonso Sánchez del Castillo' (45).²¹ Marrying one's daughter and the transference of a dowry were part of a family's reputation, as a way of publicly declaring that women in a family are subjected to the morals of the time, inscribing them within the patriarchal system. As stated in the *Siete Partidas* (1260), the book of reference for Castilian private law, women are subjugated to men because they are understood as inherently inferior:

The quality of the condition of men has several graduations, for the person of a freeman is judged according to law differently from that of a slave, although, according to nature, no distinction exists between them. And also men of noble descent are honored and judged in another way from those of inferior rank, and priests from laymen, and legitimate children from bastards, and Christians from Moors and Jews. Moreover, the condition of a man is superior to that of a woman in many things and in many respects, as is clearly shown in the Titles of this our book which treats of all the matters aforesaid. (quoted in Korth and Flusche 1987, 397)

²⁰ (I think you know well how, because of my sins, I became a widow since the death of your father five years ago, on Saint Andrew's Day. God knows how much need and debts your father left me with, and these debts are so many and so great that the money he left was not enough to pay them).

²¹ (And above all my sorrows I have no other greater than to pay your sister's dowry as I had promised the honorable Fabián Sánchez, son of Alonso Sánchez del Castillo, whom she married, *if I only had a thousand ducats* ...). My emphasis.

While the condition of women was legally viewed as inferior to men's position, the dowry provided them economic rights and protection if they were to lose their husbands or needed to end their matrimony as a result of extreme situations. The dowry was a specific sum of goods (money, but also property, furniture, clothes, jewelry, textiles, food, etc.) that women carried with them when they married to help with the economic burdens at home (Gamboa 1997, 57). The husband legally administered the dowry: 'In life, [the husband] managed the wife's dowry as his own financial resource; in the event of any eventuality, the husband only had to provide from what he had left' (59). However, it is here where dowry becomes ambiguous, as the archives show various ways in which women could file lawsuits against their husbands if they spent or inappropriately wasted the dowry's resources without their permission.

This material and financial element within the matrimony is better understood then as 'the private property of the wife' (Korth and Flusche 1987, 400) within Spanish canon law. Therefore, in most cases, women could use their dowry as a personal asset, containing properties and other goods in different forms. The dowry was not a requirement to consecrate the matrimony, but it was customary of many families, regardless of their socioeconomic status (Gamboa 1997, 56). Even when husbands died and left debts, women could protest and request to obtain part of their dowries from their husband's property before the debts were paid (Kagan 1981, 86-88). Although the dowry provided women with direct access to the local economies, they performed various roles and occupations that also impacted the community's financial capacities. As Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru argues:

The participation of *novohispana* women in the economy was in many cases as simple transmitters of goods, through dowries and inheritances of family wealth but also as entrepreneurs in activities such as bakeries, *pulquerías* [taverns], pastry shops, chocolate shops, etc. And for their incorporation into domestic service, an occupation that was always underestimated and poorly paid, but which was essential in domestic life for several centuries. (2006, 168)²²

Catalina uses matrimony and the dowry, two main components of societal organization, to justify her pleas for her son's urgent attention. While she portrays herself as assuming the lead of the family and underscoring the importance of Isabel's matrimony, she also uses these examples as a discursive mechanism to force her son Gonzalo to tackle a prevalent issue: his lack of communication and financial support for his family. This mechanism can even be read as a psychological game in a trial with the male-dominated system as the basis of the appellant's requests. Therefore, Catalina uses the specific and vulnerable position of her daughter to also obtain other outcomes that influence her personal affairs. In this form, Catalina provides updates to her son about the happenings around town while implicitly considering her own monetary objectives. To emphasize her son's duties as the family's male head, Catalina further argues: 'he tenido entendido que vos me habíais de favorecer largamente para esto, pues es tanta razón. Así mi señor hijo, por amor de Dios, os ruego que no me olvidéis, ni a vuestra hermana, que os prometo que si no fuese por ella y su marido que podría vivir de limosna' (Sánchez Rubio and Testón Núñez 1999, 45).²³ Here, once more, Catalina uses an emotive statement to persuade Gonzalo to fulfill her requests. On this occasion, she uses the verb 'favorecer', which could

²² For a case-by-case examination of women's impacts on the Mexican economy according to their ethnic status, see Cangas Arreola 2006, 9-17. See also López Beltrán 1998.

²³ (It is my understanding that you ought to favor me greatly in this matter, because it is the right thing to do. Therefore, my dear son, my lord, for the love of God, I beg you not to forget about me or your sister, because if it was not for her and her husband I would be living on the mercy of alms).

be translated as advance, help, or even please, but historically, also implies a gendered action. According to the *Diccionario de Covarrubias*, 'favorecer' means 'patrocinar, ayudar' ('sponsor, help') but the accompanying example to clarify the word's meaning is 'al que hace favor a la dama' ('the one who does favors for women'). Catalina knows her legal rights and takes advantage of them in writing, nearly as an extortion mechanism that she implicitly narrates amid the pleas for mercy. Additionally, she makes a clear connection between the financial help from her daughter and her economic struggles, prompting and expecting a reaction from Gonzalo, as a woman is now in charge of the family.

The figure of the widowed authoritative woman holds a distinct place in the Iberian context. Allyson Poska's research highlights that during the early modern period, Spanish widows had several paths available upon their husbands' demise. There were two main options: the first was to live with their youngest daughters, as the general norm was for them to take care of the mother until her death, or in fewer occasions, the mother would ask the daughter's husband to move into her house with her daughter. In this second scenario, the widowed mother assumed the role of household head, and the daughter's husband, 'far from undertaking the responsibilities of the man of the house, . . . became little more than a farmhand' (Poska 2000, 318). As seen in her narration, Catalina's story aligns with this latter option, as her narrative reveals that her daughter and son-in-law reside with her. Yet, she expresses gratitude towards them, acknowledging that without their support, she would struggle even to eat. Women like Catalina navigate their widowhood by leveraging their surroundings, legal acumen, and even their physicality as tools for contestation and resistance.

While Catalina refers solely to family members in these letters, she also mentions a woman named Benita who seems not to belong to the family tree. Catalina explains: 'El negocio de Benita os hago, señor, saber que ha más de seis años u ocho que está casada en Almagro y tiene cuatro hijos' (Sánchez Rubio and Testón Núñez 1999, 45).²⁴ This is all Catalina mentions about this woman in her first letter. However, it is by reading Catalina's following letters that one starts to understand who Benita is. In 'Carta 6', Catalina explains: 'vuestro hermano Fabián Gutiérrez os envía una información de que Benita es casada en faz de la Santa Madre Iglesia en Valenzuela, cerca de Almagro' (48).²⁵ However, it is in the 'Carta 7', where Catalina presents the *información* from Fabián, where the whole story about Benita and Gonzalo's relationship is disclosed:

Yo he tenido noticia que, queriéndose casar v.md. en esa tierra, le fue puesto impedimento diciendo tenía dado palabra de casamiento a Benita López, vecina de Almagro. Y para que allá conste no ser así y estar v.md. libre y poderse casar, le envió un testimonio e información de cómo la dicha Benita está casada en Valenzuela más ha de tres o cuatro años, y tiene tres hijos de su marido, y hace vida maridable con él, y está casada en faz de la Santa Madre Iglesia de Roma, la cual lleva el señor capellán Francisco Montero, portador de ésta. (49)²⁶

²⁴ (I tell you the story of Benita, my lord, as it has been six or eight years that she is married and has four children in Almagro).

²⁵ (your brother, Fabián Gutiérrez sends you information from Benita, as she has been married at the Holy Mother Church in Valenzuela, near Almagro [in the Mancha region]).

²⁶ (I have received news that you have been wanting to marry in that land, your grace. But an impediment had been placed on you as you had already promised to marry Benita López, neighbor of Almagro. However, in order for you to freely marry over there, for the records, I send you a testimony and information on how the said Benita is already married in Valenzuela for more than three or four years and has three children with her husband, with whom she lives a married life. Benita is married in the face of the Holy Mother Church of Rome, which was carried out by the chaplain Francisco Montero).

This information, described by Fabián, but requested by Catalina, presents the story of Benita. She used to be Gonzalo's fiancée – or wife as this information is clearly tailored for its precise purpose – in Castile at some point. This information does not stand by itself unless it is connected to the whole story. Catalina is informing Gonzalo of Benita's whereabouts to both ensure Gonzalo's safety as he is starting a new family in Mexico and to exchange information for material compensation. Furthermore, this narration illustrates how these letters become material products of exchange and trade. These letters acquire a valuable material condition that oblige Gonzalo to respond, take action, and remunerate his mother for protecting his status as single within the Iberian Peninsula.

Catalina further underscores the potential and value of her letters through hidden meanings:

de todo os envié una información muy cumplida, que la hizo vuestro hermano Fabián, la cual envié con el padre Francisco Montero; procuradla, que va allí cómo no hubo matrimonio entre vos y ella, ni otro pasó, y que por el visitador fue determinado así, para que libremente os podáis casar, pues no tenéis impedimento; y esto digo porque supe que os lo habían puesto allá. ('Carta 8', 52)²⁷

The widowed mother recognizes the dangers associated with her son's intentions to marry and establish a new family in New Spain, aware of the pervasive dread surrounding the Inquisition. The sections about Benita in Catalina's letters, both implicitly and explicitly, reveal a deep-seated fear of the Inquisition, known for scrutinizing and punishing deviations from marital norms.²⁸ The depiction of Benita stands out as particularly crucial in the letter. Benita's own movements, her remarriage in a different town, the birth of her children, and her relocation to a nearby town furnished Catalina with valuable information that could potentially be converted into monetary gain. Therefore, Catalina utilizes her own physical mobility to collect information about Benita, as outlined in her letters, and about her son, whose prospective marriage in New Spain as a free man is a pivotal element in this intricate web of information and mobility.

Catalina ends the letter emphasizing how unstructured her family is, with her other sons, Gonzalo's brothers, in different places in the Peninsula and Northern Africa, who do not attend to her needs. She also acknowledges that her son's properties are being rented or sold for an unreasonable amount of money. Catalina provides the exact amount of *maravedies* (a unit of gold) these houses cost and should be marketed as. This knowledge also demonstrates that Catalina is well versed in finances and knows the market prices to sell or rent.

In all her letters, Catalina makes references to similar elements of her struggles: her family's financial struggles, which have a substantial impact on her as an individual and her own wellbeing. Even if women show compliance with the patriarchal system in which they are not allowed to function without a male presence in their petitions, their same narrations demonstrate a decisive intervention in the creation of a colonial economy. These women's petitions demonstrate their ability to narrate stories that provide them with economic advantages and rewards. In this sense, women's affective mobilities cross gendered borders. Through these relational experiences, Catalina enters a space of economic exchange through affective mobilities. These narrated forms

²⁷ (I sent you a document with very detailed information from your brother Fabián with Father Francisco Montero; take care of this information because in that record it is stated how you never married Benita or any other women [in Castile]. With this document it is clear that you can marry freely as you do not have any impediment; I restate this information because I have witnessed that this information is in the document).

²⁸ See the Royal Decree sent by the bishop Juan de Zumárraga, inquisitor in Mexico, entitled 'incumplimientos que se siguen de no hazer vida con sus mujeres los españoles que son casados o desposados y residen en essa tierra [Nueva España]' (AGI, 'Registros Generalísimos', Indiferente, 427, 58).

of mobility, which she draws upon, are examples of her most intimate desires, but they are not merely rhetorical: they function as a means to insert herself into the early modern transatlantic economy. These rhetorical mechanisms are examples of female legal and commercial discourse, which is hidden in letters built on familial and personal information. However, this discourse also forms a structure for negotiation. While complying with imposed gendered roles, Catalina also transgresses them by navigating the early modern economic world through affects. Ultimately, Catalina's literary and communicative skills do not exclusively portray her ability to move and access a masculine world of exchanges, trade, and power; they additionally illustrate her own rhetorical prowess embedded in a discourse of sympathy that resonates with her destitute conditions.

4. *Female Affective Mobilities: Widowed Women Building the Colonial Legal Archive*

As demonstrated in the previous section, Catalina, a widowed woman, crafted narratives in her transatlantic letters that endowed her with greater agency to seek material and economic support. These narratives, originating from propertied yet non-elite women physically located in Castile, transcended geographical boundaries, reaching into New Spain. These accounts represent a fraction of the narrated female transatlantic experiences during the sixteenth century. Spanish and criolla women living in New Spain also share their orientation towards obtaining financial advantages from the Crown. Specifically, in this section, I refer to widowed women who were once married to conquistadors or men with important *oficios* (positions) in the Real Audiencia de México, which was the highest Spanish court in New Spain. These widowed women used the legal system through the Audiencia to seek economic help to live according to their *calidad*. What is most remarkable about these women's legal discourses is their rhetorical capability to create marvelous stories about themselves and the men in their families. These discursive strategies emphasize that these women were married and therefore honorable. And because they state and support their honorable status, they also seek rewards and compensations. Through a complex imposition of social mores, women understood that their marital status was, in many instances, an additional factor delineating their rights, duties, and prerogatives.

While in epistolary narratives women often highlight the family's domestic intimacies, indicating a quasi-private aspect of this genre, the legal documents analyzed in the subsequent sections show women narrating and engaging with various forms of mobility aligned with the public sphere. These activities are often connected to American conquests, indigenous labor, or transatlantic commerce. Archival legal documents were predominantly public since, in most cases, the Spanish populace was aware of their natural rights. Despite the ambiguity of Castilian law in the sixteenth century, as Richard Kagan notes, 'knowledge of the law was an essential ingredient in winning a lawsuit' (1981, 23). With many townspeople serving as eyewitnesses, their testimonies became crucial evidence in the legal process. Consequently, women, despite being viewed as inferior to men due to their reproductive roles, were knowledgeable about their rights and adept at utilizing all available legal and social resources to accomplish their objectives, even in the face of male disapproval.

Archival documents show the various and distinct ways in which women approached the Audiencias to file lawsuits, present proof of merits, and request licenses. For example, in 1561, Isabel de Caballos organized and compiled a proof of merits in the name of her deceased father, who was one of the first Spanish conquistadors in the conquest of Mexico.²⁹ Cases of women

²⁹ AGI, Audiencia de México, 97, Ramo 2.

like Isabel are abundant within the archive's *legajos* (documentary bundles), as conquistadors' wives and daughters were born at the epicenter of the turn to the mercantile system of the time, and knew how to navigate the legal system. A widowed woman who does not have enough money to live to the standards she desires, de Caballos used her father's respected status and honorable actions to highlight her pristine lineage. She employed the memories of her father's actions across space – his conquests, his cross-continental journeys, and his discoveries – to impress the Audiencia and obtain *socorros* (financial help) because she is 'de buena vida y fama y est[á] tan pobre y necesitada', as one of her witnesses says.³⁰ While Pedro Caballos, Isabel's son, is the one who finds the witnesses who testify favorably in the proof of merits, it is Isabel who files the complaint and who fights the petition. Women like Isabel were able to enter the legal system through their storytelling abilities, sidestepping patriarchal social norms designed to prevent women from using the law to their advantage. In fact, the witnesses, who are mostly renowned conquistadors, answer two questions about Isabel's status, highlighting who oversees the petition and providing evidence that Isabel obeys patriarchal norms. While men needed to prove their courage and *actitud caballeresca* (honorable behavior) in these petitions, women, as shown through their legal narratives, needed positive evidence of their marital status, honesty, and honor. Once these elements were clarified and positively fulfilled by women, they could start narrating their case, which often demanded actions against that would destabilize the same patriarchal system. As one of the witnesses confirms, Isabel deserves what she asks for in her petition because she is 'hija de conquistador y [es] de buena vida y fama'.³¹

The *calidad* of this woman provides her with greater authority to ask for more compensation. The *calidad* and lineage in the American territories shifts from the peninsula's contexts, as many people obtained higher *calidad* statuses solely by being the offspring of Spanish conquistadors whose socioeconomic status was not originally prominent on the peninsula.³² Isabel, knowledgeable of her rights and benefits, emphasizes the fact that she does not hold an *encomienda de indios* (an official grant of indigenous land and labor) because her husband died at an early age. Women could hold *encomiendas* and became *encomenderas* (owners of the land and labor), but they could lose them quickly if they were not careful, as *encomiendas* were in high demand.

Among the various white *encomenderas* in New Spain, particularly in the Yucatán Peninsula, is Ana Segura. In 1552, Segura petitioned for a license to delay her return to New Spain from the Iberian Peninsula, as she was tending to her gravely ill husband in Catalonia.³³ This example illustrates women from socioeconomic backgrounds similar to Segura's, who often traveled between the Americas and the Peninsula under a range of conditions, always mindful of their financial status and their contribution to the economic infrastructure. Segura had received an *encomienda* through the *repartimiento* (a distribution of *encomiendas*) executed by Hernán Cortés, being one of the first women to migrate to New Spain in the early sixteenth century. She utilized the legal system to request a one-year extension for her return to New Spain, aiming to prevent the Audiencia from reassigning her *encomienda*, likely to a man.

³⁰ (very honest, widowed, and poor). AGI, Audiencia de México, 97, Ramo 2, 1r.

³¹ (a daughter of a conquistador and she is of honorable life and fame). AGI, Audiencia de México, 97, Ramo 2, 5r.

³² María Elena Martínez discusses this merit-based process in relation to the sons of conquistadors. However, she either overlooks or does not address its application to women. While it is predominantly men who claimed genealogical ties to obtain *encomiendas* or monetary support from the Crown, based on their fathers' merits, this example illustrates that women of Spanish descent also utilized the legal system in similar ways (2008, 124-128).

³³ AGI, Audiencia de México, 96, 1552.

Encomiendas, representing land and free labor, were highly sought during this period, with a long list of applicants, mostly men, seeking them as compensation for their honorable deeds. Understanding this dynamic, Ana Segura sent a letter to the Audiencia de México to secure her *encomienda* and inform the authorities of her delayed return. This letter exemplifies the discursive construction of women's physical and socioeconomic mobility across the Atlantic. Additionally, this record demonstrates how the system relegated women from economic endeavors and forced them to commit themselves to their domestic and care-taking duties. Yet, they displayed resistance through petitions, asserting their roles as organizers and proprietors of property and land.

In 1569, the widowed María de Vitoria mounted this kind of resistance through narration.³⁴ Her deceased husband, Juan Sánchez Pericón, was sent on a transpacific expedition to provide help to the *pobladores* (conquistadors or soldiers who (re)populated the land) in the conquest of Guam Island (current Micronesia) which, according to the document, was geographically part of China. De Vitoria not only narrates how her husband died as an honorable man fighting in the name of the Crown for a just war, but also extols the greatness of her husband's doomed actions.

María de Vitoria, poor after her husband's death, legitimizes her petition through the rhetoric of her narration of these misfortunes. She narrates that her husband, the captain Pericón, who was a *vecino* of Mexico City just like her, was serving as governor of the Zacatecas mines in New Spain when the Mexican Viceroy, through the Audiencia, requested him to start the expedition 'teniendo noticia de su persona',³⁵ which highlights the *calidad* and dexterity of Pericón. She explains that, among the more than fifty soldiers to embark on this official journey with María's husband, there was one captain assistant named Lope Martín who somehow knew the foreign land. María then emphasizes that Lope Martín, praising the lands around the Pacific Islands,

previno a la mayor parte de los soldados y marineros que iban en la nao y les dio a entender que estaban cerca de la tierra muy rica y que si venian en lo qual dezia los llevaría a robar la costa de la China donde todos fuesen muy ricos y que después los metería por el Estrecho de Magallanes para ir adonde quisiesen y siendo todos de este parecer dio el dicho piloto parte de ello a [Pericón].³⁶

This evocative description allows María to portray herself as an eyewitness through her tone and style, criticize corrupt men and the commerce system, and emphasize her knowledge about those lands and expeditions. The misfortunes of her husband, resulting in his death, are due to the excesses of men like Lope Martín. She understands that providing a clear division between the type of men (or masculinity) who work with conquest expeditions would suffice to grant her access to compensations by using her husband's glorious acts. María depicts her husband as a martyr for the Crown, and one who does not betray Catholic and imperial morals. She explains that her husband, after hearing Martín's plans to detour from the original journey to help the Spanish soldiers in Guam,

³⁴ AGI, Audiencia de México, 98, 1569.

³⁵ (being aware of his character). AGI, Audiencia de México, 98, 1569, 1r.

³⁶ (Warned most of the soldiers and sailors who were on the ship and told them that they were near a very rich and fructiferous land, and that if they would comply with what he demanded, he would take them to rob this coast of China. And just like that, they would become very rich and then they would go through the Strait of Magellan to travel wherever they would please. All of them agreeing with Lope Martín, he provided this information to Pericón). *Ibid.*

no dio audiencia diciendo que por Vuestra Merced le estaba mandado que fuesen a hacer el dicho socorro y que aquel se había de proseguir y visto por el piloto y los demás soldados que no le podían pervertir del servicio de Vuestra Merced trataron entre todos de matarle así al dicho mi marido capitán como a Pedro Sánchez Pericón mi hijo que iba por su alférez.³⁷

Here, the figure of the conquistador and warrior for the Crown can be equated to the figure of the missionary. Both the conquistadors and the missionaries acquired textual features from each other in chronicles and hagiographies (Lavrin 2014, 152-153). In other words, each narrative helped to shape one another. Pericón's duty is not only to help the Crown's soldiers in Guam, but also to enforce and transfer the Catholic dogma to the newly encountered populations. Pericón helped with the Spanish Empire's 'global project to evangelize all parts of the world', including China, Japan, and the Philippines (134). María illustrates here a clear image of the Empire's expansionism through commerce and religion by additionally highlighting New Spain's geographical position as key for the transmission of Christianity throughout the Pacific Ocean. However, this narration suggests that the treacherous peoples here are not the 'new' land's natives, but the very soldiers of the empire. As such, Pericón does not die as a martyr fighting for the Empire against the indigenous, which would have been appropriate and masculine. Instead, he meets his demise due to the greed and corruption prevalent among the Empire's own people.

The way women describe physical movements and actions in their judicial narrations clarifies the unique strategies they utilized both to use the legal system to their advantage and manipulate the patriarchal norm to obtain more freedom. Regarding physical mobility, women moved around the imperial territories with or without licenses, depending on the historical period. However, the petitions for licenses that are in the Archivo General de Indias demonstrate that there was a continuous flow of female passengers who went and returned to and from the Americas during the sixteenth century regardless of their origin. The most common motif for petitioning a license to travel was to comply with the sacrament of matrimony, as women were often left behind. Adhering to the norms of the patriarchal system, highlighting the literary tropes of their masculine husbands or sons, allowed them to travel physically and provided them with protection should their previous or future actions violate societal rules or their gender roles.

5. Conclusion

We find that these women tell stories to themselves in order to stay afloat. They also reproduce these stories in writing, immersing themselves in official, bureaucratic, and legal writing to achieve their goals. These goals evidence the proto-capitalist society that is being created in a patriarchal world. Women are constantly relegated to second place, but nevertheless, they know how to navigate this position to find better economic and social outcomes. Through letters, litigations, and petitions, widowed women describe their movements both as a form of justification, with details of their personal lives through intimacy and affection, and as products that affect the early modern economy.

³⁷ (could not believe what Martín was saying, exclaiming that your grace had ordered him to go and fight for the Crown by helping the other soldiers, and that they would continue their journey. However, when Martín and the other soldiers heard this news, as my husband could not be corrupted by the rest of the crew's members, all of them killed him and my son, Pedro Sánchez Pericón, who traveled alongside my husband as his lieutenant). AGI, Audiencia de México, 98, 1569, 1v.

Widowed women create a fundamental bridge for understanding other women with other demographics and in different contexts. As we cross the Atlantic into colonial Mexico, these women function here as a pivotal point of comparison for future studies. While Spanish widowed women may hold some privileges in specific situations, these are women who use their various forms of mobility or transgressive acts to inherently question the colonial-patriarchal-mercantilist early modern system. Even if these women objectify themselves as docile, modest, and subordinated female individuals throughout their petitions, letters, and testimonies, they, more importantly, self-represent and identify as mobile agents. Their agency permits them to both explore and utilize their public surroundings and the bureaucratic system, and depict how others, including their male counterparts, execute their own mobility to justify their actions. As a result of combining both experiences, these women obtain authority and often overcome their financial and legal struggles.

The women whose cases I have examined in this article do not view themselves as objects who assess their self-worth in relationship to men; men's permission to live and act freely is unnecessary for them. They move and search out different possibilities to socially and financially advance on their own terms to obtain compensation. These case studies provide specific examples of the many ways women from different socioeconomic statuses navigate male-dominated societies. Even though they were not merchants, traders, or soldiers whose labors were intricately connected to movement, these women found themselves in motion in various spaces. They access mobility through correspondence and day-to-day interactions and conversations in transatlantic environments. Additionally, they also physically move from the Americas to the Iberian Peninsula and vice-versa to supervise family matters and their businesses as *encomenderas* and heads of household. Furthermore, they authorize themselves to transgress moral rules and the principles of a gendered society. The cases I have analyzed in this article exemplify white women's self-authorization through physical, ethical, and collective transgressive movements as they make the strange familiar through collective and feminine knowledge.

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Letters from Sodom: 'Emotional' Agency and Evidence of Sexual Crime in the Early Modern Courts of Italy and Spain*

Juan Pedro Navarro Martínez
University of Barcelona (<juanpedro.navarro@ub.edu>)

Abstract

In the judicial system of the *Ancien Régime*, some crimes were notoriously difficult to prove. It was essential for the prosecution to properly argue the case and, to this end, it was necessary to develop a hierarchical system of evidential means that would allow any hint of suspicion to yield results. The goal of the essay is to carry out a detailed study of the written documents confiscated in judicial proceedings for sodomy in civil courts of the Mediterranean area during the early modern period. The objective is to understand the 'expressiveness' that this judicial evidence contributed to the process of signalling criminal practices within the judicial system of Spanish and Italian courts. In addition, by studying love letters between men, missives from their relatives and friends commenting on disagreements, the popular literature consumed by the defendants, certificates and other official documents, and their demands for employment, the essay will shed light on their everyday life and forms of dissidence, with the aim of understanding the particular 'emotional' agency of these individuals.

Keywords: Civil Court, Letters, Sodomy, Spanish Monarchy, State of the Church

1. Introduction

In 1913, Rainer Maria Rilke published a German translation of the love letters of a late seventeenth-century Portuguese nun, Mariana Alcoforado. The letters quickly became a popular text on carnal desire, the pain of spite and the absence of love. In the epilogue to his translation, Rilke wrote of his fascination with the symbolic and intimate character of this type of writing,

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presumably bequeathed to a single reader. 'We are not lacking in information and comments on the life of feelings. But we only see them in the brief moments when they suddenly rise above the current of destiny or – with a little more calmness – when already dead, collapsed, they float over its surface' (2009, Epilogue, 59). Numerous researchers after Rilke have pointed out, however, the possible documentary falsification of Alcoforado's letters, suggesting that they might be attributable to Lavergne de Guilleragues, a French politician and intellectual who may have made up an epistolary exchange to give expression to the intimate writings of some of the women of his time. The Rilkian definition of the 'life of feelings' is nonetheless interesting, emphasising, as in the case of Alcoforado/Guilleragues, past emotional spaces. The letters observe that forbidden love bestowed an enjoyment 'de las delicias nunca imaginadas'¹ and that 'Todas las emociones que me causas son siempre intensas'² (Alcoforado 1996, Second Letter, 61).

Indeed, these discourses, long reviled by historiography, are today becoming increasingly necessary in the elaboration of memories and genealogies of the emotional. As for the document type in which these spaces of intimacy in the *Ancien Régime* can best be recognised, the choice of today's social historians would not be too different from Rilke's: the epistolary form. Personal letters, over and above official and political ones, are an essential resource for understanding everyday life, social concerns and more subjective representations centred on desire and affection (Mestre Sanchís 2000; Castillo Gómez 2011, 2017). This type of source allows us, at the same time, to learn about the political and ideological opinions of the writers, as well as about questions concerning social uses, gender dynamics and, of course, aspects relating to the affective network of the sender and the receiver of the letters.

However, there are spaces and issues that are difficult to narrate in writing, even for those closest to the recipients. Sexual practices against nature, and specifically sodomy, which referred to all relations between persons of the same sex, had already been elevated to the category of crime through civil and canonical legislation. In medieval Castile, it was the *VII Partida* of Alfonso X the Wise (1252-1284) which condemned those 'que fazen pecado de luxuria contra natura'³ to death. The *Pragmática de Medina del Campo* (1497) by the Catholic Monarchs raised the capital punishment to death by fire (Chamocho 2012, 104-105). In the Italian regions, each governed according to its own courts and institutions, civil laws were asynchronous. Siena already had a law in force equating sodomy and heretical practices as early as 1262, and only three years later, Bologna would also enact a specific law against sodomy. In the city of Florence, meanwhile, sodomy as a crime began to be punished by castration from 1325 (Rocke 1987, 701-723). Shortly afterwards, the city of Rome, through the *Statuti del Comune* of 1363, began to criminally prosecute these practices, condemning those accused of sodomy to death by fire (Baldassari 2005, 110). As the centrepiece of the Papal States, the city of Rome was also governed by the series of bulls that, since the papacy of Pius V, openly condemned sodomy as a criminal offence. The reform of the Apostolic Constitution, 'Cum Primus', and the bull *Horrendum illud scelus*, which set out that clerics guilty of sodomy were also to face death by fire, were published in the space of just two years, between 1566 and 1568. Against such a bleak background, it is obvious that sexual transgressions of the norm were hardly ever explicitly stated. So much so that all unnatural sexual practices were recorded under the name of 'nefando' – something that cannot be named without causing disgust or horror. Thus, the

¹ (of delights never imagined).

² (all the emotions you cause me are always intense).

³ (who commit a sin of luxury against nature).

term ‘nefarious sin’ became a common phrase in moral theology, but also in scribal practice, as a synonym for various crimes such as sodomy or bestiality. As these practices could hardly be mentioned, tracing them in writing in the private sphere is even more complex.

The present research focuses precisely on this dual functionality of letters seized in judicial cases concerning the crime of sodomy. I will consider two different historical moments: sixteenth-century Rome and eighteenth-century Madrid. The *raison d'être* for this choice lies in the substantial similarities in the development of the judicial processes for nefarious sin in the ‘Tribunale Criminale del Governatore’ in Rome and in the ‘Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte’ in Madrid, two courts of ordinary justice which, during the early modern age, administered justice in the respective cities, exerting social control over these jurisdictions alone.

The aim of this essay is to carry out a detailed study of the written documents confiscated due to their ‘expressiveness’ and to analyse them as judicial evidence that contributed to the process of identifying ‘hardly probable’ criminal practices. Additionally, the study uncovers love letters between men, as well as missives from their families and friends. It will also be possible to learn more through the popular literature consumed by the defendants, certificates and other official documents, and even their job applications. All this will give us insight into their everyday life and dissidence, with the aim of understanding the ‘emotional’ agency of these individuals.

2. Methodology, Sources and Archives

It is essential to reflect on the methodological model applied to this type of research. Of course, as this research is based on archival evidence, it does not renounce the principles of social history. However, due to the nature of the subject matter, it is imperative to distinguish between ‘voluntary’ and ‘involuntary’ sources (Molina 2017, 21). ‘Voluntary’ sources were elaborated by the organs of power, institutions and erudite circles to conceptualise, legislate on and repress nefarious attitudes in the early modern Age. Following Alloza Aparicio’s approach, if it is accepted that legislation, punishment and the police were the mechanisms to strengthen the control of public order and combat crime in the European monarchies, the sources which structured this repressive system and which, ultimately, reinforced the discourse against nefarious sin (2000, 256) must be addressed. Before delving into the legal corpus referring to the sin against nature, the first type of document to be dealt with is the medieval and early modern theological and moral literature. This is not so much an exercise in the genealogy of stigma, but rather a confirmation of the persistence of the social conception of sin. In short, this set of documents should serve to elaborate a conceptual framework around nefarious sin, one whose temporal arc is long enough to check whether the primitive meanings of sins against nature are indeed maintained in the eighteenth century. At the same time, a legal corpus on nefarious sin is compiled, and if the previous one presupposes its validity, here it is confirmed, with the maintenance, confirmation and hardening of much of the legislation of the thirteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by the eighteenth century.

As regards the Hispanic case, the starting points are the *VII Partida* of Alfonso X in 1284, the royal pragmatic drawn up in 1497 by Isabella I and Ferdinand II, and the pragmatic of 1598 by Philip II. These are complemented by council decrees, documentation relating to the distribution of institutional powers, addenda and reforms drawn up by these same institutions, and the legal regulations surrounding judicial processes. In a similar vein, for the Italian case, all the sources from the ‘Tribunale Criminale del Governatore’ in Rome are of interest, allowing us to learn about the functioning of this punitive institution. In the same way, the *Statuti Comunali* of the city, and pertinent legislation not only in the Papal States but also in neighbouring communities,

should also be collated. Of course, papal bulls and other elements relating to early modern moral culture are also taken into account. These sources are to be understood as the basis of the modern legal framework for the persecution of nefarious sin in early modern Europe.

With regard to the ‘involuntary’ sources, this is where most of the archival work has been concentrated, and it is the textual group to which the proposed methodology essentially refers. These sources are described as ‘involuntary’ because, as they are testimonial and administrative in nature, they are outside the scholarly circuit. We refer essentially to sources deriving from judicial proceedings for sodomy, bestiality or other nefarious practices. Like other types of proceedings, these sources are complex both in terms of content and volume. In this sense, the use of court records as a primary source for the reconstruction of history should be reflected upon. François Soyer defends the use of these sources in his book *Ambiguous Gender in Early Modern Spain and Portugal*. Still from the point of view of inquisitorial studies, he stresses that the files ... offer historians a wealth of information regarding various cultural, religious and social aspects of life in the early modern Hispanic and Lusophone world over a period stretching from the late fifteenth to the early nineteenth century. The value of this information is all the greater given the fact that it concerns tens of thousands of men and women, including individuals from a great variety of social backgrounds, ethnicities and ages. (2012, 11)

Although Soyer is speaking of files emanating from the Spanish inquisitorial courts, the situation is similar for the judicial archives of the Italian civil courts. Aside from what Soyer points out about the validity of these sources in delineating specific social and cultural contexts, these sources (which must be worked critically and conscientiously) are basic for an understanding of sexual dissidence in early modernity. With respect to the volume of this type of document, it is interesting to go back to Federico Garza Carvajal’s reflection in *Quemando mariposas* (Burning Butterflies). He describes the texts emanating from the judicial process in these terms:

Trial documentation could vary in length from one hundred to five hundred pages and consisted of the testimony against the accused, the graphic charges laid out by the prosecution lawyers, the arguments of the defence, the confessions of the accused and the eyewitness accounts, long descriptions of the tortures inflicted by the accused and, finally, the justifications and sentences executed by the different courts. (2002, 26)

Because of the relational nature of the present article, such sources have served to highlight the process of change in criminal dynamics, the procedural differences between the various judicial superstructures that have been examined, and variations in sentences according to institution/subject. But if we focus on the privileged source of this research, the letters and private writings confiscated by early modern courts of justice, it should be added that these ‘involuntary’ sources are essential, from a socio-cultural perspective, for understanding the links and relational networks of individuals and activities – accomplices, witnesses, behaviour of family circles – as well as their *modus vivendi*. Specifically, we have focused on two pieces that are diverse in provenance but very similar in format. The first of these is the set of letters transcribed in the judicial proceedings against Domenico Pelliccia, a monk of the monastery of Subiaco, in the district of Rome who, in 1595, was accused of the crime of sodomy by the ‘Tribunale Criminale del Governatore’. He was, according to the prosecutor, a repeat offender in this crime.⁴ The judicial dossier is transcribed in the file of the trials of the ‘Tribunale Criminale del Governatore’, and although

⁴ Archivio di Stato di Roma, Tribunale criminale del Governatore di Roma, L. 280, 290, P. 25.

it is a copy, it preserves all the texts that were used to implicate Domenico. The second, much later chronologically, is the set of letters, certificates and texts collected in the court case against Sebastián Leirado by the ‘Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte in Madrid’ in 1769, for the same crime. Unlike the Roman criminal proceedings, in the case judged by the ‘Sala de Alcaldes’, we find the original confiscated documentation, which also allows us to observe some symbolic elements that have been lost in the transcription of other letters.⁵

The different nature of the archives consulted entails different ways of accessing the information. For the majority, by accessing digitised databases – some of them with online resources – and in others, by means of catalogue guides, which ranged from loose folders to bound books published in volumes. In all of them, the information was checked with the reference service of each of the archives. A few problems common to almost all the archival sources that have been worked on should be noted. The first is the ambiguity with which some catalogues and non-original document covers describe the proceedings. Although the key words ‘sodomy’, ‘nefarious sin’, ‘sin against nature’ and ‘bestiality’ were used to start the search in the archives, some of the files consulted turned up other terms such as ‘illicit friendship’, ‘rape’, ‘statutory rape’ or ‘adultery’ as *hidden* causes of nefariousness. In many of them, these terms appeared in the guide and on the cover page prepared by the archivists, while the original case referred directly to the ‘Pecado Nefando’ or ‘Crimine di Sodomia’. In other cases, there is more ambiguity, with no criminal term being used on the title page or in the catalogue. Specifically, in the Italian documentation, we must refer essentially to the Archivio di Stato di Roma, in Sant’Ivo alla Sapienza. The documentation on the ‘Tribunale Criminale’ is fully preserved and easily accessible, with a series of publicly available indexes drawn up in the eighteenth century having been previously consulted. In the case of Spain, it is the Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN) in Madrid that holds the remains of the documentation of the ‘Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte’ in the collection of Suppressed Councils. In his inaugural speech as director of the AHN in 1898, Vicente Vignau pointed out how, in the nineteenth century, a large part of the Sala’s collection had been destroyed by the disasters of war at the beginning of the century, as well as sold by weight (28-29). Subsequent studies, focusing on the composition and uses of the documentary material of the ‘Sala’, have pointed to the disintegration or loss of documentation essential for reconstructing the judicial proceedings and functioning of the court (Pablo Gafas 2001, 381-394). In the case of our research, although a large part of the *Indices de Causas Criminales* collection has been microfilmed, we must note the almost total absence of preserved files, with only a few remaining, such as that of Sebastián Leirado, which are almost always attributed to late periods within the chronological arc of the early modern Age.

3. Governatore and Alcalde. *Different Courts, Similar Justice*

We will focus our attention on two specific institutions, which played a fundamental role in the social and moral control of the cities in which they were located. The ‘Tribunale Criminale del Governatore di Roma’ was one of the most particular judicial bodies in the institutional framework of the State of the Church. Constituted by order of Eugene IV in 1436, its fundamental functions were to administer the city’s justice, its zone of influence, and to deal with civil and criminal cases (Baldassari 2005, 129). In practice, its constitution brought about a change in the Vatican’s institutional order, creating a sort of ‘morality police’. So much so that from 1514, under

⁵ Archivo Histórico Nacional, *Consejos*, Leg. 5373, Exp. 4, P. 1.

Leo X, its capacity to control the community increased exponentially, extending the control of the tribunal to forty miles around Rome. However, it was not exempt from jurisdictional conflicts, as Irene Fosi points out, with other institutions such as the 'Tribunale del Campidoglio', which had civil and criminal jurisdiction over Roman inhabitants (*incolae*) and citizens (*cives*), except ecclesiastics (2008, 63-84). Nevertheless, throughout the early modern period, and until its suppression in 1816, it maintained police control of Rome in both civil and criminal matters. Its structure was made up of two lieutenants of the 'cappa negra' (black mantle), two lieutenant substitutes, ten substitutes responsible for conducting proceedings, a chief notary and twelve substitute notaries in charge of the 'cancelleria' (Barrovecchio San Martini 1981, 2-18).

Because of its particular jurisdiction, it was set up as a civil court though founded by the curia itself. The *Governatore* himself was part of the pontifical power structure. This gave the structure the capacity to take concrete action against accused ecclesiastics and to act on moral crimes (Cicerchia 2016, 42-43). In fact, through the texts emanating from the Third Lateran Council and endorsed by Pius V, it was to ordinary justice that the fate of ecclesiastics accused of sins against nature fell. In *Bande giovanili e vizio nefando*, Marina Baldassari reports a total of 114 judicial proceedings for nefarious acts during the period 1600-1666 (2005, 131). Our research in the archives of the *Archivio di Stato* also shows that during the period 1557-1595, 57 cases were recorded for sodomy or attempted nefarious crimes, which indicates a continuation of the persecution. However, a slight increase should be noted during the papacy of Clement VIII (1592-1605), the period to which one of the files studied is confined (Zapperi 1994, 48).

On the other hand, the 'Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte' was established as a unique repressive magistracy within the judicial institutional framework of the Spanish monarchy (González de Amezua y Mayo 1926, 402). As a body, it existed before the court was established in Madrid, as a result of the syncretism of several positions of medieval origin, such as the *alcaldes* of the court and the *Rastro* (the borderline of the city), which fulfilled an essential function for the judicial control of the court environment, even with an itinerant capital (Pablo Gafas 2001, 101-104). It did not acquire its definitive form until 1583, after the court was established in Madrid.

If we look at the institution's punitive activity quantitatively, we must highlight the functionality of the *Inventario General de Causas Criminales* (General Inventory of Criminal Cases), a unique source that allows us to identify the cases brought by the *Sala* for the period 1584-1766, regardless of their preservation or otherwise in the collections.⁶ If we concentrate on the inventories relating to the eighteenth century, with the documentary series being cut off in 1766, 16,957 trials are recorded, with a total of 30,363 convicts (24,625 men and 5,738 women), according to notes by Ángel Alloza Aparicio (2000, 111). These data are complemented by the *Inventario de las causas pendientes en la escribanía de cámara de don Manuel Joseph Fernández* (Inventory of the cases pending in the notary's office of Don Manuel Joseph Fernández), which extends our scope of analysis to the periods 1767-1785. Regarding crimes against morality, in which nefarious crimes were also tried in the years covered by the General Inventory for the eighteenth century, the court prosecuted 4,074 people, 13% of the total number of cases. The presence of nefarious cases (sodomy and bestialism) was not numerous when compared with those of illicit dealings, adultery or statutory rape, although it does provide much higher figures than the *Chancillerías* (High Courts of Justice) for the same period.

⁶ This documentary series, compartmentalised in volumes and microfilmed, can be consulted under the original call number: AHN, *Consejos*, L. 1.241; 1.267; 1.290; 1.302; 1.332; 1.333; 1.381; 1.382; 1.392; 1.404; 1.410; 1.420; 2.783; 2.784; 2.785; 2.786; 2.787; 2.788; 2.789; 2.790; 2.791; 2.792. 2.783, 2.784; 2.785; 2.786; 2.786; 2.788; 2.789; 2.790; 2.791; 2.792; 2.793.

If we are to complete this scheme of criminal cases for nefarious crimes in late modern Madrid, we cannot exclude the levers of action of very powerful surveillance of the 'Sala de Alcaldes' network. The system of day and night patrols of the different barracks/districts is perhaps the most characteristic aspect of the 'Sala de Alcaldes'. This phenomenon increased even more in the eighteenth century with the creation of the secret police body within the 'Sala' itself, whose fundamental function was to assimilate the police powers that until then had been held by the *alcaldes de barrio* (neighbourhood commissioner). However, it was in 1782 that a professional and autonomous police force, the General Superintendency of Police for Madrid, was permanently created.⁷ The establishment of this new body was due, according to Antonio Risco, to the high growth of 'desoficio' (disoccupation) and 'vagamundismo' (vagancy) at the beginning of the 1780s (1991, 97-98). Although Risco points to the 'abnormal' increase in the population, the strategy initiated by the Count of Floridablanca could perhaps be seen as a change in the punitive pattern, essentially fuelled by Enlightenment reformist policies based on the ideal of social control and order. The Superintendency, comparable to other European institutions of its time such as the *Bureau de mœurs* in Paris (1747), assumed a large part of the jurisdiction of the 'Sala' in matters of surveillance and control (Steinberg 2001, 28-31).

The *Alcalde de Sala* and the *Governatore del crimine* were, in essence, two similar figures. They were charged with managing civil justice, but also the social and moral order of two cities that were unique in terms of their political constitution. On the one hand, Rome was the spiritual capital of Christendom, and had to set an example of moral rectitude. On the other, in the course of early modernity, Madrid was becoming a transatlantic metropolis on which more and more territories depended. In both cases, these cities were demographically overtaken by their hinterland, and the institutions of control had to develop complex police programmes, embodied in the Roman 'sbirri' or Madrid's 'rondas'. And in the causes of nefarious sin, it was also necessary to activate certain devices of subjective vigilance that allowed the veracity of the crime to be known 'in depth' (Foucault 2012, 243-247).

4. *The Written Document as Court Evidence*

As has been noted, in the judicial systems of Southern Europe in the *Ancien Régime*, some crimes were notoriously difficult to prove. Because of the difficulty of proving crimes against nature, it was essential for the prosecution to argue the case well. And as argued above, crimes of a sexual nature were the most difficult to prove by oral testimony. They therefore required more physical and material evidence. The near impossibility of finding certain and clear evidence of the consummated act made it necessary for the justice system to elaborate a hierarchical system of evidential means that would allow any hint of suspicion to yield results (Espinosa Mesas-Moles 2013, 294). The evidentiary phase began in the plenary, after the procedural case was received by the court. Using the voluntary source par excellence in this case, we have recourse to the legal corpus on this issue. In the Spanish case, the way to acquire procedural evidence is already specified in the *III Partida* of Alfonso X, in its Title XIV, and specifically in Law XII on *Cómo el pleyto criminal non se puede prouar por sospechas, si non en cosas señaladas*.⁸

Criminal pleyto que sea mouido contra alguno en manera de acusación, o de riepito, debe ser prouado abiertamente por testigos, o por cartas, o por conocencia del acusado, e non por sospechas tan solamente.

⁷ AHN, *Consejos*, L. 1382, 246-314.

⁸ (How a criminal case cannot be proven by suspicion, but by real evidence).

Ca derecha cosa es, que el pleyto que es mouido contra la persona del ome, o contra su fama, que sea prouado, e aueriguado por prueuas claras como la luz, en que non venga ninguna dubda. E porenden fallaron los Sabios antiguos en tal razón como esta, e dixeron que más santa cosa era, de quitar al ome culpado, contra quien no puede fallar el Judgador prueua cierta e manifiesta, que dar juyzio contra el que es sin culpa, maguer fallasen por señales alguna sospecha contra él. (López 1829, 185)⁹

The allusion in the *Partidas* to this ‘clear as light’ evidence refers directly to what has been understood as full proof. Of this, the following stand out: the defendant’s own confession by means of coercive tools or spontaneously (we will talk about this later); testimonial evidence endorsed by the appropriate number of informants and by means of registers of evidence; and documentary evidence that fulfilled the requirements described in the law. Previous scholarship has given a good account of the importance of testimony in sodomy cases in early modern Castile (Serrano Seoane 2006, 334-428). For the territories of the State of the Church, a greater laxity in the prosecution of the crime itself should be highlighted. Recidivism, as in the case of Domenico, could lead to death by fire, while first time offences could be commuted with pecuniary payments. However, as the anonymous *Ad peccatorem Sodomitam ut cognoscat quam ceteris criminibus crimen sodomiticum sit detestabilius* states, the testimony of the acts was limited, and a person who had already been condemned for this crime could not testify for it (Chamocho Cantudo and Manchón 2022, 131).

In addition to the evidence of privileged witnesses, documentary evidence was also considered full proof. In this sense, the medical reports of forensic doctors and surgeons – since they did not always have to be linked to judicial institutions – occupy a central place in proving nefarious sins. As it was a difficult crime to prove, in cases involving violence of any kind, medical examination was essential for analysing bodily marks in search of clues (Vázquez García and Moreno Mengíbar 1995). Together with the medical reports, notarial records could be a full resource in cases of cohabitation involving a joint residence, although they are a much more anecdotal type of documentary evidence than the previous ones. Certificates of good neighbourliness issued by neighbourhood *alcaldes* or *corregidores*, which served to make the court aware of the reputation of the accused, are quite a different matter. With a similar vocation, in a society in which social control continued to be based mainly on the micro dimension and on moral dogma, we can also observe the repeated use of parish documentation which, for the causes of nefarious sin, is essentially limited to marriage certificates and baptismal certificates. The first type of documentation does not seem to condition the process too much, as there is no specific content regarding the civil status of the accused, although it does allow us to widen the sphere of testimony, to understand the socio-economic dynamics of the seizure of assets or, ultimately, to condition the defences through the demonstration of the dependence of other members of the family. Baptismal certificates, on the other hand, could alter the process itself, especially in relation to victims. The certification of the age of an accused person could exempt him from the application of an ordinary penalty – *de jure* – or a serious extraordinary penalty – *de facto* –, as well as providing essential family data. Fidel Tubino’s classic work on the use of baptismal certificates as judicial evidence points out the importance of this source in civil law (inherited from canon law), taking

⁹ (The criminal lawsuit that is brought against someone in the manner of accusation, or of *riepto*, must be proved openly by witnesses, or by letters, or by knowledge of the accused, and not by suspicions only. So true is this, that the suit which is brought against a man’s person, or against his fame, should be proved and ascertained by evidence clear as light, in which no doubt shall transpire. And so the ancient sages decided that, for this reason, it was a holier thing not to blame the accused man, against whom the judge cannot find certain and manifest proof, than to pass judgment against the innocent, even if they should find by signs some suspicion against him).

into account its character as a public and official instrument, which indicates ‘the status of the baptised, of being a member of the Church, subject to canonical rights and obligations according to their human evolution’. Finishing off his definition of the baptismal certificate, Fidel Tubino describes it as ‘the spiritual nationality card of a subject’, which in cases of crimes of this nature, is even more interesting (1955, 13). Once the suitability and variety of full documentary evidence has been understood, those exercises of semi-complete proof must be pointed out. The obvious example of this type is the testimony of a single reliable deponent, although in crimes against nature, due to the laxity in evidential procedure this kind of ambiguous evidences could be considered as full (Espinar Mesas-Moles 2013, 297). As can be assumed, the accumulation of material evidence in this type of judicial process occurred especially in the summary phase, and more specifically in the procedure of seizure of movable property. It is in this disposition that the bulk of physical evidence is – frequently – to be found. In this sense, the seizure of these goods was an inexhaustible source of information for the magistrates, who found a multitude of supposed material evidence – in addition to some immaterial evidence – to feed the case against the owners. A knife, a sheet or a shirt could be used to incriminate an individual for numerous crimes. We will focus on the documentary evidence provided by such goods.

When, in 1595, the judicial process began against the young monk Domenico Pelliccia of Subiaco, accused of having sexual and epistolary relations with an organist and another young priest, the public prosecutor of the ‘Tribunale Criminale’ ordered the arrest of the defendant, who was also identified as a recidivist. According to the principles spelled out in the bull of Pius V, regarding the degradation of the ecclesiastical state, any Catholic cleric could be handed over to the secular power and was liable to torture. Thus, the ‘sbirri’ took it upon themselves to capture him and put him in the ‘Rocca’ prison. At the same time ‘che lui sara in carcere, in quell estesso tempo andraversi insieme col proposto et el notario in casa di esso don Domenico et pigliaresti tutte le scritture, cercando le casse et altri locchi secreti, dove poteve tener altre scritture’.¹⁰ The confiscation of material was accompanied by evidence gathering, in order to be able to point out the falsity of the testimony when Domenico denied his involvement in the nefarious crimes. In the words of the prosecutor, ‘faresi inventario, conservandole presto [presso?] di voi, per poter confrontarle con questi scritture quando lui negasse che fussero di mano sua’.¹¹

Similarly, in 1769, during the case brought against Sebastián Leirado, aged 23, accused of sodomy with numerous young men in Madrid, the *alcalde* also decided to confiscate assets.

Doy fe de que a Sebastian Leirado se le han embargo bienes, los que se depositaron en Joseph Cortés de lo que se hizo pieza separada y para que coste lo pongo por diligencia que firme en Madrid a veinte y un días del mes de Noviembre de mil settecento y setenta y nueve, firma Pedro de Martínez.¹²

When Sebastián Leirado’s assets were seized, the *alcalde* found a chest, which had to be inventoried and put in a separate location. Leirado owned few movable assets and, of all of them, the

¹⁰ ASR, Tribunale criminale del Governatore di Roma, L. 280, 290, P. 25, 8v-9r (that he will be in prison, at that same time go together with him and the notary to the house of don Domenico and take all the writings, looking for the chests and other secret places, where he could keep other writings).

¹¹ *Ibid.* (you would take inventory, keeping them close to you, to be able to compare them with these writings when he denies that they were by his hand).

¹² AHN, *Consejos*, Leg. 5373, Exp. 4, P. 1, 8r (I attest that Sebastian Leirado’s goods, which were deposited with Joseph Cortés, have been seized, of which a separate inventory copy was made and for the record I sign this in Madrid on the twenty-first day of November in the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-nine, signed by Pedro de Martinez).

interest of the ‘Sala de Alcaldes’ was limited to a chest full of papers.¹³ Among them were two theatrical librettos, one of Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s *La vida es sueño* with Rosaura’s speeches underlined – ‘En lo alto de un monte Rosaura vestida de hombre en traje de camino’¹⁴ – and another one with the script of *Diablo Predicador* and the part of Octavia, both of which showed that Leirado regularly played female roles in the theatrical space of the Calle de Relatores in Madrid. There are medical and judicial reports of his male condition – which could become full proof – which had been called into question throughout the proceedings against him, as he was believed to be a woman or a hermaphrodite. Of these, the letters of Joaquín de Yrachea Pagola, Ordinary Judge of Villafranca de Navarra, where Sebastián had lived, ‘without any fault and in a Christian manner’, before he had lived in Madrid, are particularly noteworthy (Vicente 2017, 52-53). This contrasts with a second letter, this one from Fernando González, who in 1766, as ordinary notary in Valencia, points to Leirado as a vagabond.

Echa inspección muy por menor de las partes de la generación de Sebastian Leyrado las qual es de perfecto hombre con proporción y corporatura a su estatura apto para la generación y aunque en la parte del asiento o poder se le advierten dos tuberculos de pequeña magnitud, aunque uno un poco mayor que el otro es prozedennzia de las emorroidales venas.¹⁵

But, among all this epistolary material, Leirado’s numerous love letters with other men stand out. This seized material would become the prosecution’s most powerful tool to convict Leirado for acts that had not been witnessed by anyone other than his sexual partner, Antonio Fernández. His love letters would be the most faithful witness to Leirado’s ‘fatal turpitude’.

5. *Family Letters and Intimate Friendships Between Affection and Shame*

Parental-filial relations, intra-family education, economies and the institution of marriage were the elements that made up the family constellation in the early modern Age. If we wish to focus on the implementation of virtuous values in the family environment, we can turn to the approach of James Casey, who points out the necessity of looking at the family for a complete understanding of any social process of development of human relations in early modern Europe. If society is made up of families, then their role in shaping the social organisation of the *Ancien Régime* is undeniable (1990, 239-240). The stable construction of the family, however, would be abruptly altered by the presence of the nefarious phenomenon in the household (Fletcher 1999, 83). The conceptualisation of family virtue came into conflict with the gendered significance of the sins of lust and, above all, nefarious practices. We must emphasise the recidivism of Domenico Pelliccia, the young cleric of Subiaco, with regard to nefarious practices. This means that, unlike other letters that were set aside in this study, the theme of shame and fear of defamation is fully present in his writings. In a letter he sent to his father in 1594, he notes the complete abandonment by his family after the first accusation of sodomy made by the ‘Tribunale Criminale del Governatore’, a few years earlier, and from which he had emerged unscathed.

¹³ AHN, *Consejos*, Leg. 5373 Exp. 4, P. 2.

¹⁴ (On the top of a mountain Rosaura dressed as a man in a walking costume).

¹⁵ AHN, *Consejos*, Leg. 5373 Exp. 4, P. 2, 20v (a very minor inspection of the parts of Sebastian Leyrado’s genitalia shows him to be a perfect man with a size and body in proportion to his stature, and fit for his age, although in the part of the anus, two small tubercles can be seen, one a little larger than the other, which proceed from hemorrhoidal veins).

Non posso immaginarmi come proceda, che tanto tempo ch'io ho spesso a ffigarmi, et servirvi lí ad notte, et fatto sempre tutto quell' oche mi è stato piacere, et poi così subitamente mi habiate abbandonato a fatto segno de inimicità ... mi pare tutto il contrario di quello che sempre mi havete dimostrato e letto a bocca, et poi ho trovato il contrario credo non mi possa dorel di me ogni cosa cosa haverei pensato e visto che mi havessi così presto abbandonato senza causa alcuna.¹⁶

Domenico's words of reproach to his father are reiterated throughout the letter. 'Pensavo di avere una famiglia in cui chi ama deve essere amato', he affirms.¹⁷ The family was the 'space in which the world of feelings, affections, the transmission of values, conduct, education and the formation of behaviour, and basically, one's own culture and way of being were regulated and specified' (Chacón Jiménez 2011, 334-335). As an organism, it was fully hierarchical, with parents assuming the role of caretakers, protectors and educators, but also of authority and the maintenance of order. Despite its strongly controlling nature, expulsion from the family sphere was a real trauma.

We do not know how Domenico's father replied, if at all. We do have some letters sent by Joseph Leirado and Rosa Lopez, the parents of Sebastián, who, a century and a half later but with similar concerns, wrote to their son on several occasions. In the first letter, written jointly by Leirado's parents, they reiterate 'que te acuerdes de tus padres, que no les des preocupaciones. En esto te digo un todo que ya sabes, que te lo dije muchas veces que seas hombre de bien y que procures venir con honra a tu casa'.¹⁸ However, they then downplay the importance of the above, referring to other matters of everyday life, such as the marriage between some family friends, 'Cayetano and Pepa la Gallega', reminding him of his unpunctual nature, and telling him that 'si no tardas mucho, llegarás a los dulces'.¹⁹ Father and mother oversaw the family and, although the domestic sphere and the *economy* were reserved for women, it was the *pater familias* who acted, by right and custom, as the ruler of the household. As the bearer of the family's masculinity, the father had to teach his sons to behave manfully, showing his virtue, honour and fame and educating them in the values and codes pertaining to their gender. Perhaps for this reason, the second letter sent to Leirado, in reference to the rumours about their son's sexual tastes, is written in the singular, although again both of them signed.

Madrid y Noviembre 13 de 1767.

Hijo y querido mío, he recibido tu carta y con ella gusto y pesar, lo uno por saber de ti y que estas bueno, lo otro por lo que me dices y yo me presumo de lo que te habrá pasado con tu amo y ahora me dejas así a mi como a tu madre con bastante cuidado de que a que me escribas en el primero correo que es lunes o segundo que es el viernes para que nos saques de tanto sentimiento. Yo y tu Madre estamos buenos y solo lo que te encargamos es que hagas de tu parte todo lo que puedas, por Dios ... que tengas paciencia

¹⁶ ASR, Tribunale criminale del Governatore di Roma, L. 280, 290, P. 25, 10v (I can't imagine how it happened, that for so long I have spent so much time in toiling, in serving you there at night, and I have always done all that with great pleasure, and now you have suddenly abandoned me and made the sign of enmity ... it seems to me the opposite of what you have always shown me and that I have read from your mouth, and then I have found the opposite. I believe that I cannot be more hurt by all the things that you have thought and seen of me, that you have abandoned me without any cause).

¹⁷ *Ibid.* (I thought I had a family in which one who loves must be loved).

¹⁸ AHN, *Consejos*, Leg. 5373 Exp. 4, P. 2, 8v (that you remember your parents, that you give them no worries. In this I tell you everything that you already know, for I have told you many times to be a good man and to try to return home with honour).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10r (if you don't take too long, you'll be there for the sweets).

y cumplas con tu obligación hasta que no se pueda más y con esta la bendición mía y la de tu Madre la recibirás en gracia de Dios, cuya vida te guarde para su santo servicio, amen.
Tu padre y madre, que más te estima de corazón y ver desean. Josep Lairado y Rosa López.²⁰

However, family members were not the only ones involved in the care and control of the defendant. While Maurice Aymard points out that the construction of intimacy in the early modern age has almost always been treated in historiography as referring to the family, the structure of the family in this period allowed for the presence of much more fluid relationships, as in the case of ‘carnal friends’, as a formula extended to the deep dimension of affection (1991, 352). These relationships of friendship were often no different from those between siblings. In these spaces of ‘respect’, ‘jokes’, ‘avoidance’ and ‘familiarity’, to use Alfred Radcliffe-Brown’s words, it was easier to explore some elements linked to sexuality and dissidence (1940). And that is why it is so interesting in this regard to look at the letters sent and received by friends, who were perhaps more deeply aware than family members of the compromising situation of the alleged sodomites. Again, Domenico’s letters to his friends show despair and a certain loneliness.²¹ In one letter to a friend, Camillo, the young man notes that ‘gran tempo che si è cantato di me ed Ms. Gio. Battista, con dire che questo praticare non andava a bono fine. Ma io non ho saputo fino adesso le cose che se sono recitate, et questo solo per la sua buona vita et fama, che lui ha et perche da i noi parenti pretti mi fu avennato che io dovesse avertire dove tirava il fine di costui’.²² To this friend he essentially confesses that he had already received some reprimands from his superiors for his licentious attitudes. To another former friend, ‘già amico’, Giovinne, however, he shamelessly points out ‘che avete continuamente creduto troppo alle lingue maledette e da cui ora mi sento abbandonato senza alcuna causa lecita ... lamentandovi di essere stati così veloci a credere a loro piuttosto che a me, vostro fedele servitore’.²³ The message expresses the hope that Giovinne might experience the truth ‘e poter vedere che, in effetti, questi sono tutti comentari di ogni seddalo, di persone impie, perverse, invidiose, false, insidiose, bugiarde che meriterebero non un suolo supplitio, ma mille’.²⁴

Again, less repressive attitudes can be observed in Sebastián’s letters. Let’s look at just one letter, from his friend Joseph Sánchez, in which we observe language very similar to that of his father. In fact, Joseph begins by recounting an anecdote from work in which, while accompanying

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9r (Madrid and November 13, 1767. My son and my dearest, I have received your letter and with it both pleasure and sorrow, one for hearing from you and knowing that you are well, the other for what you tell me; and I imagine what will have happened to you with your master and now you leave me and your mother with enough care that I urge you to write to me, with the first post which is Monday or the second which is Friday so that you can relieve us of so much worry. I and your Mother are well and we only ask you to do everything that you can, by God ... that you have patience and fulfil your obligation until it is no longer possible and with this my blessing and that of your Mother you will receive it in the grace of God, whose life he will keep you for his holy service, amen. Your father and mother, who hold you dearest to our heart and wish to see you. Josep Leirado and Rosa López).

²¹ Domenico recorded his writings in a register book, a practice that was relatively common among men of letters in the early modern Age.

²² ASR, Tribunale criminale del Governatore di Roma, L. 280, 290, P. 25, 22r (There has long been talk about [the relationship between] me and Mr. Gio Battista, and it has been said that this practice was not going to end well. But I have not known until now the things that have been uttered, and this only because of your good life and fame, which you have and because I was told by our relative priests that I should know where the end of this one was going).

²³ *Ibid.*, 9v (that you have continually believed in cursed tongues [gossips] too much, and by that I now feel abandoned without any lawful cause ... complaining that you have been so quick to believe them, rather than me, your faithful servant).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 11v (and to be able to see that, in fact, these are all commentaries of all kinds, of impious, perverse, envious, false, insidious, lying people who deserve not just one punishment, but a thousand).

‘una señora viuda a su tierra, me marche sin licencia de la señora y a poco rato que llegamos a esta tierra nos echaron presos al criado y a mí, y luego vino la noticia y les dijeron a la señora que me había ido con una puta y ahora no sirve satisfacción ni testimonio del Alcalde’.²⁵ Then, in the following lines, he says that he has not written to her ‘porque aquí ha corrido la voz de que te habían dicho que eras una mujer, y no nos hemos atrevido a escribirte hasta ver una carta tuya por el sentimiento que podrías sentir’.²⁶ Joseph is indeed referring to the doubts raised by Sebastián’s androgynous appearance and dubious sexual practices, but also to the fact that he sometimes wore women’s clothes (Navarro Martínez 2018, 135). He ends by instructing Sebastián not to write to a mutual friend, Javier, ‘porque será para gran pesadumbre si lo saben en su casa ... y así tendrás paciencia asta que Dios quiera’.²⁷ Joseph’s behaviour and the care, even love, for Leirado that comes across in his writing should not be surprising. Sebastián’s letter reproduces a properly eighteenth-century dynamic of intimate friendship. Friendship is understood as love, a love ‘whose affections and passions restrain reason, that is, the spirit’ (Ranum 1991, 257-258). It is plausible to think that, in addition to being concerned, Joseph disapproved of his friend Sebastián’s sexual practices, but in the intimacy of the letter he seeks to comfort and care for him. His last words are:

Adiós, querido Sebastián, siempre tuyo, que de corazón te estoy amando, tu mayor amigo Joseph Sánchez.²⁸

6. *‘Ahí tienes mi corazón’: About Some Love Letters Between Men*

Friendship relationships, as we have been observing, were charged with affection, at least in manuscript letters. Some of the letters we have seen, however, are also charged with the language of courtship and sexual desire. Unfortunately, we have found no direct record of Domenico Pelliccia’s relationship with the young organist to whom he had been linked by the judicial authorities. However, a brief but essential work by the Italian historian Giovanni Dall’Orto (1995) should be highlighted in this regard. Thanks to this work, it has been possible to trace the letters that the young clergyman exchanged with another lover, Giovan Bernardino Condestabile. It is clear from the various letters written by Domenico that the relationship was not very fruitful. In one of the first letters, the religious states that:

... e quali quando mi a remembrano non posso fare di lamentarmi di voi fortemente, vedendovi tante volte mancato di quello che havete promesso, como si aspetta il mio fidel servire, il quale è stato come per effetto havete visto, senza macula alcuna, con quello amore, con quella fede, che si apertiene a un verissimo servitore verso di voi mio signore e patrone, al quale son spinto da grandissima ragione di adimandarvi la mia inpromessa.²⁹

²⁵ AHN, *Consejos*, Leg. 5373 Exp. 4, P. 2, 11r (a widowed lady to her land, I left without the lady’s permission and shortly after we arrived on this land they threw the servant and me into prison, and then the news came and they told the lady that I had gone off with a whore and now the Alcalde’s satisfaction and testimony is of no use).

²⁶ *Ibid.* (because word has spread here that they had told you that you were a woman, and we have not dared to write to you until we have seen a letter from you because of the feelings you might feel).

²⁷ *Ibid.* (because it will be a great sorrow if they know it at home ... and so you will have patience until God wills it).

²⁸ AHN, *Consejos*, Leg. 5373 Exp. 4, P. 2, 27r (Farewell, dearest Sebastián, always yours, I love you from my heart, your greatest friend Joseph Sanchez).

²⁹ ASR, Tribunale criminale del Governatore di Roma, L. 280, 290, P. 25, 884r (... When I remember them, I cannot help but complain strongly of you, seeing that you have so many times failed to fulfil what you have promised, as my faithful service deserves, who has been, as you have seen, without blemish, with that love, with

In another letter, Domenico notes the pain of not even being able to write because of his lover's absence. In the last of the letters, we can also note the breakdown of relations between the pair, perhaps due to the 'public fame' that the situation was acquiring in the little town of Subiaco. Dall'Orto points out, in this regard, that there may have been a kind of platonic rather than physical love between these men. In our view, there is not enough documentation to support this assertion. What is evident is the deep affection that Domenico had for Giovan Bernardino.

Che quel che ho fatto per voi, non l'averia fatto per nesuno homo del mondo, e questo che ho fatto, lo fatto per vostro contento e voi lo sapete e poi per riconpensa cercate di darmi la morte, e sappiate che io non fo altro che lacrimare ... Ho Dio, è possibile che non lo cognoscete? Che io per amor vostro serrei andato mille miglia lontano e voi non vi volete movervi a pietà di venire sino in casa.³⁰

In the case of the love letters written to Sebastián Leirado by numerous lovers, the judicial process itself quickly unmask the identities of the senders. In October 1769, a little less than a month after the judicial process against Sebastián Leirado began, the defendant received a love letter from Ramón Prieto Montesinos, corporal of the Regiment of the Spanish Royal Guards. The letter was not addressed to Sebastián, but to María Theresa Garrido, who turned out to be, according to the prosecutor, a female *alter ego* of Sebastián, used to avoid being captured by the justice system: 'El motivo de escribirle con el nombre de María al declarante era porque el nominado Francisco Lázaro tenía una novia llamada María ... venían con dicha cifra dirigidas a el declarante que no las abría y se las leía a la novia'.³¹

The mode and manner of proceeding are similar to those of the Spanish *chichisbeo* (flirtation) of the eighteenth century; the letter begins with the natural introductions and good wishes of health. Ramón notes that, on arriving in Madrid. 'Ahora en la Corte más me acordaré, pues tan poco tiempo como nos tratamos y el cariño que me tomó V.Md, despierte que estoy deseando el ver a V.Md., quanto antes'.³² On the margin of the letter, however, there is a short reproach, which, seems more part of the courtship game initiated by both lovers: 'Pues me dixistes cobarde en mi rodilla sentada, advierte, que fui cobarde pues me parecias falsa'.³³

The second letter is dated one month earlier. It is also referenced by the official notary in the trial. 'La carta que se halla al diez y siete y diez y ocho que tiene pintado un corazón se la escribió al declarante Francisco Lázaro, soldado de Guardia Española, desde el lugar de Getafe'.³⁴ The scribe refers to this beautiful letter which is reproduced and transcribed in full below.

that fidelity that is required of a true servant towards you, my lord and master, towards whom I am moved by great cause to ask you what you have promised me). I am indebted to Giovanni Dell'Orto not only for his dedication in transcribing the document but also in paraphrasing it into contemporary Italian, which helped me to refine the English translations in this article.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 886r (What I have done for you, I have not done for any man in the world, and what I have done, I have done for your pleasure and you know it, and then you try to give me death in recompense, and know that I do nothing but weep, Oh God, is it possible that you do not know it? That for your love I would have gone a thousand miles to fight, and you are not moved by pity to come to the house).

³¹ AHN, *Consejos*, Leg. 5373 Exp. 4, P. 1, 39-40v (The reason for writing with the name María to the declarant was because the named Francisco Lázaro had a girl friend called María ... the letters came with this name, addressed to the declarant, who did not open them and read them to his girlfriend).

³² AHN, *Consejos*, Leg. 5373 Exp. 4, P. 2, 16v (Now, at court, I shall remember more, for as little time as we have spent together and the affection you have shown for me, I am eager to see you as soon as possible).

³³ *Ibid.*, 40v (You called me a coward while sitting on my knee: be warned that I was cowardly because you seemed false to me).

³⁴ AHN, *Consejos*, Leg. 5373 Exp. 4, P. 1, 39v (The letter found at seventeen and eighteen, which has a heart painted on it, was written by the declarant Francisco Lázaro, soldier of the Spanish Guard, from the place of Getafe).

De Francisco Lázaro,

Dueño mío, Dios quiera darte salud la que me asiste es para cuanto me quieras mandar que solo mi cariño desea, le ocupes en cosas de tu mayor agrado. No puedo menos que participarte como el motivo de no haberte escrito ha sido por haber estado preso y sin poder entrar a la tinta ni papel, y ahora que me veo en Cuartel, entretenido, lo pongo en ejecución y te digo que luego que recibas esta me escribas como te hayas, pues mis ojos quejosos de tu ausencia aclaman por tu vista. Si supieras que días he pasado en el calabozo siempre batallando con tu persona, pero entre tantas penas, me conformo con decir, a de llegar día en que nuestra vista sea causa de vociferar el amor más excesivo, la lealtad más perfecta y el amor más enardecido que en dos amantes haya. Y esta mi idea, con pedir a Dios te guarde tu vida muchos años. Madrid y septiembre 17 de 1769.

Tu más humilde servidor hasta morir.

En reverso. Ay tienes mi corazón, recívelo con cariño y recreate con el ya que no puedes conmigo. Francisco de Lazaro.³⁵

Although it is supposedly addressed to María Theresa/Mariquita Garrido, the text is written entirely in the masculine form. Francisco de Lazaro begins by excusing himself for not writing, because he is in prison and does not have access to the necessary instruments, and by declaring his longing for his lover. The image represents how Lázaro gives up his heart, depicted as a crowned sacred heart (a symbol of Christian fidelity and purity), in what may be an allusion to his military office, namely in the service of the monarch. In addition to this, he is winged by two arrows, which could symbolise Leirado's love. Arrows are a recurring motif in religious iconography, reminding us of martyr love (Navarro Martínez 2018, 132). Despite the singularity of this letter of love between men, in the judicial declaration Francisco Lázaro has no qualms in pointing out that the letter is indeed his, and that if he called him in the feminine it was because 'Oyó decir que era almofodrita [sic. Hermafrodita] y que esto es la verdad'.³⁶

As has been shown, love letters are, regardless of their nature and subject matter, an essential source to provide insight into a space of intimacy that would be difficult to trace through other types of sources. Passionate encounters, reciprocated affection, jealousy or separations illustrate the 'emotional' agency of individuals accused of sodomy. But in addition to this, in the case of love letters between men, this is the only textual space in which these relationships can be narrated, in contrast to the vast number of documents that tell us about repression and sexual violence (civil and religious laws, confessional manuals, judicial processes, etc.).

³⁵ AHN, *Consejos*, Leg. 5373 Exp. 4, P. 2, 17r-18v (By Francisco Lázaro, My master, may God grant you health, the health that assists me is for whatever you want to send me, which only my affection desires, to occupy it in things of your greatest pleasure. I cannot but tell you that the reason I have not written to you has been that I have been imprisoned and unable to write with ink or paper, and now that I see myself in the barracks, entertained, I put it into effect and tell you that as soon as you receive this letter you will write to me as you have done, for my eyes, complaining of your absence, are crying for your sight. If you only knew what days I have spent in the dungeon always struggling with your person, but among so many sorrows, I am content to say, the day will come when our sight will be the cause of vociferating the most excessive love, the most perfect loyalty and the most ardent love that there is in two lovers. And this is my idea, by asking God to save your life for many years to come. Madrid and September 17, 1769. Your most humble servant until death. On reverse. Here, you have my heart, receive it with affection and enjoy it as you cannot with me. Francisco de Lazaro).

³⁶ AHN, *Consejos*, Leg. 5373 Exp. 4, P. 1, 50v (He heard that he was an almofodrita [sic. Hermaphrodite] and that this is the truth).

6. Conclusions

We began this article by pointing out, as Rilke did more than a century ago, the need to unravel the life of feelings encapsulated in letters. As Anne Martin-Fugier remarks with quite different assumptions, during the early modern period certain codes shaped educated epistolary exchanges, which were governed by figures of compromise between the public and the private (1991, 262). This is not the case with ‘minor letters’, of no political and institutional interest, but loaded with meaning for the history of emotions. Spontaneous, full of sincerity, sometimes even badly written, they are a daily record of the lives of individuals. Among some of Domenico Pelliccia’s letters, there are numerous letters of receipt for the purchase of objects and some ‘promissory notes’ to acquaintances and friends who had lent him money.³⁷ In Sebastián’s letters, as well as fragments of his theatrical scripts – Sebastián was an amateur actor in some of Calderón de la Barca’s plays – there is even an advertisement in which he offers himself as ‘un criado que sabe guisar y peinar, cose de toda ropa, y componer medias de seda y dejarlas como nuevo’³⁸, or the receipt of the payment for the rent of his house in Madrid. There is no doubt that documents referring to laws, ordinances and mandates are important for understanding a society through its sources of power. However, these elements, totally involuntary, unmediated and, of course, intended for specific purposes, allow us to better understand human relations and everyday life in the *Ancien Régime*. This is precisely the richness of letters, advertisements and other forms of non-formal communication. They are essential to elaborate a new social history of affect and sexuality in the early modern period.

This comparative analysis, which starts from the shared element of confiscated letters, has demonstrated the aspects common to the constitution and punitive praxis of two different courts in time and space: the ‘Tribunale Criminale del Governatore di Roma’ and the ‘Sala de Alcaldes de Madrid’. Of course, the documentary richness of these letters, texts and clippings, is closely related to the role they played for the judicial bodies of the early modern age. The usefulness of private letters as judicial evidence, especially in criminal cases which were difficult to prove, is evident. The nature of the confession of the accused as ‘full proof par excellence’ is not to be doubted. However, the discovery of letters in which the fear of being reprimanded for these sexual practices is openly mentioned, as can be seen in some of Domenico Pelliccia’s writings, or letters of love affairs between men, as in the case of Leirado, were in themselves forms of ‘deferred confession’.

Family and friends maintained secrecy around those accused of the crime of sodomy. In the domestic sphere, families adopted two strategies. The first was one of absolute disengagement from the family member accused of this type of crime, the well-known ‘abandonment’ that Domenico himself pointed to. Secondly, as Sebastián’s relatives determined, the family could understand the practices, not without misgivings or fear of further reprisals. Here it can be observed that the parents’ requests are aimed at avoiding ‘future problems’, although there is a predisposition to forgiving past ones. On the other hand, friendship has been referred to as a space for greater relaxation. In early modern friendship, we observe a greater strength in the forms of involvement, which become deeper than family relationships (Castan 1991, 41). This can be seen in the case of Domenico, who only confesses his ‘mistakes’ to his friend, or in the text written to him by Joseph Sánchez, who, although he is fully aware of his friend Sebastián’s preferences, continues to support him. The importance of relational networks, not just friendships, should be noted in

³⁷ ASR, Tribunale criminale del Governatore di Roma, L. 280, 290, P. 25, 10-11 and 12.

³⁸ AHN, *Consejos*, Leg. 5373 Exp. 4, P. 2, s.f. (a servant who knows how to cook and comb, sew all kinds of clothes, and make silk stockings and make them as good as new).

this regard. Homoerotic relationships in the early modern period, especially consensual ones, had a strong social component. In the case of Sebastián Leirado, a whole network of ‘friends’ who shared his sexual desires has been uncovered (Vicente 2017; Navarro Martínez 2018).

A final fundamental element in this study is the transcription of the love letters between Domenico and Giovan Bernardino, and between Sebastián Leirado and two of his lovers, Ramón Prieto and Francisco Lázaro. As Dall’Orto points out, in the case of Domenico Pelliccia we can observe the dynamics of courtship and disaffection typical of Italian gallantry at the end of the sixteenth century. A genuine love that could break down barriers and offer body and soul if the lover so wished (1995). In the case of the two letters of Leirado, we observe in both courtship dynamics similar to those of the heteronormative relationships of the Spanish eighteenth century, although the masculine language of the texts allows us to queer these texts, understanding the gender fluidity of Sebastián/María. In sum, the study of the written pieces emanating from the judicial records is fundamental for a thorough understanding of emotions in the early modern period. Moreover, the study of letters may allow us to elaborate new approaches to the ‘memory’ and ‘genealogy’ of a written culture that definitively breaks with the traditional patterns of the *Ancien Régime*. In the meantime, we will continue, like Rilke (2021, Third Letter, 39-44), to question ourselves with every letter that comes into our hands.

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Printed Riddles in Early Modern Italy Traditional Perspectives and New Approaches*

Marco Francalanci
University of Alcalá (<marco.francalanci@uah.es>)

*O voi ch'avete li 'ntelletti sani,
mirate la dottrina che s'asconde
sotto 'l velame de li versi strani.*
Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, IX, 61-63

Abstract

The purpose of the article is to draw attention to Italian riddles of the Renaissance. This publishing and literary genre has been studied especially from ethnological or literary perspectives. What is completely lacking, however, are studies that deal with how this literature was produced, how it circulated and who printed it. These perspectives are highly relevant: they make us realise that such texts were not only produced by the likes of Cervantes, Bembo or Shakespeare, but that riddles were often written, performed and printed by men who are now forgotten, sometimes not fully literate and often not from elites. The intention here is to place these writings in a methodological and historiographical framework that may lead to more in-depth study in the future.

Keywords: Authorship, History of historiography, Popular literature, Renaissance Studies, Riddles

1. An Unintentional Solution to the Most Famous Italian Riddle

*Se pareba boves alba pratalia araba & albo versorio teneba & negro semen seminaba:*¹ one of the earliest known vernacular texts is a riddle.

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¹ (He led oxen in front of him & he ploughed a white field & he sowed a black seed). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

This is, of course, the famous *Indovinello veronese* (*Veronese Riddle*), a postilla found in a manuscript written in Spain during the eighth century and now preserved at the Biblioteca Capitolare in Verona. The story of the discovery and dating of the postilla is well known and can be found in any Italian literature textbook. We will briefly go over some of the details.

The credit for the discovery of the *Indovinello*, which was not immediately recognised as a riddle, belongs to Luigi Schiaparelli. In 1924 he produced a commentary for the *Orazionale mozarabico* of the Biblioteca Capitolare, the codex in which the postilla is contained, from a purely palaeographic and codicological point of view. Schiaparelli also expressed himself on the provenance of the postilla, claiming that it would have been added to the *Orazionale* by an unknown hand in the city of Verona at the end of the eighth century (Schiaparelli 1924).²

Shortly after the publication of the aforementioned article, Nino Tamassia opened the real debate on the postilla in a piece written together with Michele Scherillo (1924), entirely transcribing and identifying it as a semi-vernacular text, an excerpt of a larger composition. Between 1924 and 1926, many scholars returned to the subject, reflecting on the linguistic identity and meaning of the postilla, but systematically failing to identify it as the mere riddle it actually was.³

The famous philologist Vincenzo De Bartholomaeis, who had spoken of the postilla – defining it as a *ritmo* (rhythm) – in a collection he edited in 1926, had moved along the same lines. It was during one of his lectures at the University of Bologna that the issue was put into a whole new light: Lina Calza, a first-year university student, pointed out the similarity of the text to some verses she had heard sung by common people and which alluded to the act of writing. She then advanced the idea that it might be an ancient variant of the same riddle, which was still performed in the rural area of the Apennines during the early twentieth century. The association was immediately accepted by De Bartholomaeis, who quickly found traces of other variants in the writings of historians of folklore and popular culture.⁴ Thus, the true nature of the postilla was identified and the debate on the *Indovinello veronese*, still considerable, finally found a clear direction after the publication of the discovery (De Bartholomaeis 1927).⁵

There is, however, an unknown story that runs alongside the one just reported and that interests us closely. In fact, before De Bartholomaeis, and following a completely different path, a sixteenth-century version of the riddle and its solution were published in the journal *La Bibliofilia* (1924, vol. 26, 179-188). The solution itself was not acknowledged by the author of the contribution and went completely unnoticed, arousing no interest among scholars who dealt with the postilla.

The key to solving the problem was contained in an article on sixteenth-century popular culture by the philologist Guido Vitaletti. In this essay (1924), Vitaletti transcribed part of the *Indovinello nuovo*. The article contained a collection of riddles in a question-and-answer form and mottos printed in Milan for Pandolfo Malatesta at the end of the sixteenth century (*Indovinello nuovo* [c. 1594]). This work contains a brief riddle that reads: ‘Campo bianco, semenza negra, doi la guarda e cinque la mena’.⁶ Next to it is the solution, which

² However, these assessments have been criticised by Armando Petrucci and Carlo Romeo in two different contributions. They suggest dating the postilla to the 830s and place its drafting in Pisa (Petrucci and Romeo 1992 and 1998). The hypothesis has been confirmed through further elements provided by other scholars (Bartoli Langeli 1995).

³ For a complete overview of the early phase of the debate, see the bibliography offered in Rajna 1928 and Presa 1957.

⁴ For example, at the beginning of the twentieth century Carlo Piancastelli published a study in which he commented on a variant of the same riddle. Piancastelli’s work is now collected in a recent anthology (in Bellosi 2001).

⁵ On the debate, see the biographical summary offered in Frank and Hartmann 1997.

⁶ (White field, black seeds, two are watching and five are carrying it).

is also given in Vitaletti's transcription: 'La penna da scrivere'⁷ (Vitaletti 1924, 183).⁸ It is clearly a variant of the most famous riddle in the history of the Italian language, which circulated at the height of the sixteenth century in several other collections and was well known during the modern age.

This story is significant. It not only allows us to reflect upon a curious coincidence, but also demonstrates the existence of a bias that has affected the study of riddles for a long time and continues to this day. Indeed, literary scholars have traditionally dismissed these literary forms, considering them merely minor productions. The case of the *Indovinello veronese* has certainly demonstrated the opposite.

It is therefore necessary to look at the studies produced on this literature as well as the paths outlined by historiography within the study of popular literature.

2. Popular Literature Between Ethnology and Literary Studies

Since the nineteenth century, in fact, various intellectuals had studied riddles relating to popular culture, essentially approaching it from two different directions that soon turned out to be complementary in their interests and methods: literary and ethnological studies. These research perspectives provided the methodological premises for later studies on riddles.

Giuseppe Pitrè, the Sicilian doctor who first introduced ethnological studies in Italy, was especially important.⁹ He had already begun to take an interest in popular traditions in the 1860s and continued to collect, publish and discuss the traditions and culture of the common people throughout his life. His work, which first focused on his native Sicily, soon involved the entire peninsula, and in the 1890s he founded the *Archivio per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari* with his friend Salvatore Salomone Marino. The journal, which lasted until 1909, was truly a national and international point of reference for studies of this nature and set the stage for a fruitful season of ethnological research.¹⁰

Equally important was the *Biblioteca delle tradizioni popolari siciliane*, a collection of 25 volumes that Pitrè published between 1871 and 1913: here, the customs and traditions of the Sicilian people were recorded and extensively discussed. The *Biblioteca*, recognised as Pitrè's great masterpiece, represents the first systematic attempt at an ethnological collection in Italy and had a very singular cultural influence. Each study is introduced by an extensive essay by Pitrè, who comments on the subject and offers an accurate overview. One of these volumes (regarding the most diverse themes, such as songs, fairy tales, proverbs, etc.) was even dedicated to riddles. The essay, although dated, still represents a solid starting point for those interested in the subject from an ethnological point of view (Pitrè 1897).

⁷ (The writing pen).

⁸ Guido Vitaletti was interested in popular culture, folklore and Italian literature (his works on Dante were particularly significant). His life was marked by family bereavements and an unstable financial situation (Bottini 1936). The fact that Vitaletti did not identify the coincidence before publishing should not be surprising: in fact, the publication of the article at the end of 1924 coincided with the publication of the transcription of the text, and perhaps, even preceded it by a few months (Tamassia and Scherillo 1924). If anything, it is more significant that no later intellectuals (including Vitaletti) noticed it when the text of the *Indovinello veronese* became known following the publications at the end of 1924.

⁹ On Pitrè's experience as a scholar, see the rich biographical profile by Dei 2015.

¹⁰ For Solomon Marino's experience and his role in the dissemination of ethnological studies in Italy, see his biographical profile (Bellantonio 2017).

In the same years, however, especially thanks to Alessandro D'Ancona, literary studies were also beginning to consider the texts of popular literature. D'Ancona's research touched on these themes on several occasions, coming ever closer to the fledgling ethnological studies. In 1878, when his *Poesia popolare italiana* was published in Livorno, a new phase of literary studies began. D'Ancona, following in the footsteps of illustrious literary scholars – Niccolò Tommaseo above all – placed these studies on a whole new level, bringing philological and literary research into dialogue with the newly born ethnological studies, which was very much in tune with Giuseppe Pitrè (D'Ancona 1878).¹¹

One of D'Ancona's undoubted merits is that he stimulated some of the first reflections on the census and organisation of popular documentation (Brambilla 2004, 31-32). One of his pupils, Francesco Novati, took up these themes and made them the subject of several publications.¹² It is to him and the work of Arnaldo Segarizzi that we are chiefly indebted for the renewal of such studies: the two intellectuals, who were also informed by D'Ancona, began to consider the editorial format of the documents together with the texts, opening up one of the most complex fields of study revolving around the study of popular literature (and one that is still a topic of debate for historians and philologists today).

In 1906, Novati delivered a speech at the Società Bibliografica Italiana that has remained famous: *La storia e la stampa nella produzione popolare italiana* (1907). Novati insisted on the relationship between popular literature and the art of printing, emphasising the need for further study. In this respect, Italy was lagging far behind France and Germany, where the relationship had been studied in depth for years. He closed his speech with an appeal, which was, as we shall see, partially heeded. He hoped to be able to start collecting and taking a census of examples of popular literature, which he said were scattered in libraries and inaccessible to scholars, who were often unaware of their existence precisely because of their lack of visibility in the collections of conservation institutions.¹³

Taking up the invitation was Arnaldo Segarizzi, Novati's friend and collaborator. Segarizzi's name is linked to the city of Venice, where he worked as a librarian first at the Marciana Library, then at the Fondazione Querini Stampalia (Pellegrini 2018). Just two years after Novati's appeal, Segarizzi published an important study, *Saggio di bibliografia delle stampe popolari della Marciana di Venezia* (1908), in which he set forth the rules that librarians should follow in cataloguing popular literature, thus offering a sort of model for producing comparable catalogues and bibliographies.

This essay was, however, only the first step for Segarizzi, who immediately afterwards devoted himself to composing his great work, the *Bibliografia delle stampe popolari italiana della r. Biblioteca nazionale di S. Marco di Venezia*, published a few years later (1913). This volume, sponsored by the *Società Bibliografica Italiana*, directed by Novati, was intended to be the first in a series that was ideally supposed to map the entire Italian heritage. In reality, the venture stopped at this first, very important volume. In fact, Novati, who died in 1915, found no heirs willing to support his project and with his passing the project came to an end. The *Bibliografia*, which was rooted in the historiographical tradition of the nineteenth century, was nonetheless a modern and unique tool for Italy in the early twentieth century.

¹¹ D'Ancona had in fact worked with Pitrè for years. The two were also in correspondence and D'Ancona systematically reviewed Pitrè's works in the journal *Nuova Antologia* (Benedetti 2012, 482). For a general study on the contacts between Pitrè and literary circles, see Benedetti 2012. Other relations between Pitrè and philological circles can be found in the broad-ranging and well-documented essay 'Il silenzio e la memoria' (Brambilla 2004).

¹² For a complete bibliography of his writings, see the references in Brambilla 2004, note 4.

¹³ On this text, see the thorough Introduction by Barbieri 2004a.

Although the work was not completed, the fruits of the collaboration were certainly valuable. In fact, the volume came out with a foreword by Novati himself, in which he reaffirmed the importance of such works and reflected upon the significance of the collected material. For the first time, an Italian library – the Marciana National Library in Venice – was striving to single out popular works in its collections that it wanted to valorise and have studied by scholars and ethnologists.¹⁴

3. *Early Italian Studies on Riddles and Michele De Filippis*

In the nineteenth and twentieth century, alongside the new ethnological and literary studies about popular literature – and because of these –, research was also being conducted on the particular literary genre of riddles. Among the first to deal directly with the genre was the philologist Vittorio Cian (Treves 1981). He wrote an erudite study in 1888 in which he analysed some of Bembo's *Motti*, relating them to popular poetry. Thanks to these compositions, Cian was able to make some initial inroads into a field of study that up to that point was practically untouched: the study of riddles and mottos (1888). Despite his observations, however, the focus of the study remains on Bembo: the information that the scholar offers on the popular literature served to better situate Bembo's work and to 'justify' the vulgar and obscene language that he used.¹⁵

Giuseppe Rua then focused more directly on the riddles of the modern age, initially looking at those associated with Straparola's *Le piacevoli notti* and then broadening his perspective to the more general phenomenon of the genre's production (Rua 1890 and 1898).¹⁶ Especially in his second contribution, Rua intervened by bringing some order to the material available in Italian libraries, mentioning the main sixteenth-century collections and considering the debts of some producers to others. It is significant that, in his studies, Rua connected the witnesses of ancient texts explicitly to those that were still common in rural areas in his time, still showing the integration between literary history and ethnology.

This was, for instance, the environment in which Guido Vitaletti studied: he arrived at riddles through the study of popular prints and appreciating the works of D'Ancona, Pitrè and

¹⁴ However, a problem of definitions arose: what were popular works? This was a difficulty that led Novati and Segarizzi to extensive debates (Petrella 2004). The arbitrariness with which the identification was adopted, based on both extrinsic and intrinsic characteristics, is perhaps one of the greatest limitations of the bibliography (Segarizzi 1913, 8). In addition, this is not the only criticism that could be levelled at the work: above all, the second part of the volume (which was supposed to contain the indexes) never came out, making it really difficult to navigate and consult. The entries are in fact arranged topographically (in order of shelf mark) and there is a lack of apparatus to relate the different entries. But if these are problems arising from the lack of continuity in the undertaking, important criticisms have also been made from a structural point of view (Barbieri 2004b). Indeed, the entries consistently lack careful descriptions of the bibliographic characteristics of the pieces, which do not describe notes of provenance of the documents and other signs of possession or use. Despite these problems, this was the first truly supportive tool for scholars wishing to tackle the analysis of popular prints, and its features were drawn on in the production of other works concerning further Italian libraries. It was only later that works similar to the *Bibliografia delle stampe popolari italiana* were produced, but in a cultural climate that had by then changed and was far removed from these early efforts by Novati and Segarizzi, who nevertheless intended to continue their work and endeavour. To mention only the main ones, it should be remembered that the bibliography of popular prints of the National Library in Florence dates back to the 1950s (Angeleri 1953). The bibliography of the Trivulziana library, which only dealt with popular works of a secular nature (Santoro 1964), did not come out until the 1960s. For similar efforts produced for the holdings of other libraries, see Angeleri 1953.

¹⁵ Apart from this article, it is interesting to emphasise that Cian (1890) was no stranger to the world of ethnology and cultivated sensibilities as a scholar of demology. In fact, he dealt at various times with traditional songs and popular culture and had a particular interest in Sardinia. He edited above all the *Saggio di canti popolari logudoresi*.

¹⁶ On Straparola, see the biographical profile by Pirovano 2019.

Novati. In the early 1920s, he began to research popular literature, realising, however, that the planning and structuring that had distinguished the efforts of Pitrè and the Società Bibliografica Italiana were fading away, both due to the death of the promoters and the outbreak of the First World War. In 1923 he published an impassioned article in the journal *Cultura*, in which he perhaps tried to carve out a role for himself that was never recognised by the Italian academic system (Vitaletti 1923). Vitaletti hoped for the resumption of Pitrè's projects (the *Biblioteca* had stopped in 1913) and of Novati and Segrizzi's bibliographies, which he said had come to a premature end. He then argued perceptively that studies had not come to a complete halt, but lamented that everyone was now working without coordination (Vitaletti 1923). He therefore put forward the idea of a project with both ethnographic and bibliographical aims, which was to be based on the collaboration of intellectuals from very different disciplines, capable of returning popular culture studies to their pre-war splendour.

Vitaletti's remarks were not out of place. The concerted work of the early years of the century was over, and certainly, if there had been more points of reference, historiographic production would have benefited from it. Yet this project never took place, and Vitaletti himself lamented it, declaring in another article that the call had gone unheeded and that he intended to continue the exploits of the great masters on his own, claiming that 'non avendo alcuno studioso di buona volontà risposto al mio invito, mi accingo senz'altro da solo all'ardua fatica' (1924, 179).¹⁷ The arduous task thus began with the description of some popular prints in the library owned by Leo S. Olschki, of whom Vitaletti was a collaborator; it also dwelt on the description of the *Indovinello nuovo*.

Up to the 1920s these were the only essays discussing the complex and interesting riddle production of the early modern period. From Cian and Rua's studies to Vitaletti's, literature and ethnology had thus often moved together, sharing aims and even publishing venues. This consonance is also present in a subtle way in the work of the scholar to whom the historiography on Italian riddles owes the greatest debt, Michele De Filippis.

He was born in Rome in 1891 and moved to the United States in 1915. In America, he enrolled in university, taking courses in Italian literature and Romance languages (first at Brown University, then at the University of Michigan). He received his Ph.D in the early 1930s from the University of Berkeley with a thesis on the sixteenth-century poet Giovanni Battista Manso, to whom he devoted several studies (De Filippis 1936 and 1937).¹⁸ In the 1930s, he became Assistant Professor at the same university and remained there until the end of his career in the 1960s.¹⁹

At Berkeley he met Archer Taylor, a Germanist who at that time was working on folklore studies (proverbs and riddles in particular), and who in 1940 had founded the California Folklore Society.²⁰ Taylor's work had a great influence on De Filippis, who took up the study of riddles on Taylor's advice and succeeded in developing a research project in three volumes, published between the late 1940s and the late 1960s (De Filippis 1948, 1953 and 1967).²¹

¹⁷ (Since no scholar of goodwill has responded to my call, I shall certainly undertake the arduous task alone).

¹⁸ On Manso, see the brief biographical profile by Calitti 2007.

¹⁹ For more on De Filippis's life, see Fucilla's biography (1975).

²⁰ Above all, Archer Taylor had published *The Proverb* (1931) and *A Bibliography of Riddles* (1939). He returned to these themes on several occasions during his career. For more on Archer Taylor, see Hector H. Lee's biographical essay (1973). It is also thanks to these studies by Taylor that a broad interest in these literary forms has spread in the Anglo-American sphere. Of the many recent publications, see for instance a work on riddles in music (Schiltz 2015) and an essay on literary theory (Pagis 1996).

²¹ In 1948, when the first of De Filippis' volumes was published, *The Literary Riddle Before 1600*, by Archer Taylor, came out. De Filippis refers to this work in his preface to introduce his topic (1948, III).

To understand the spirit in which De Filippis worked and the perspectives in which his research was embedded, it is useful to look at the introduction to the first volume, in which the guidelines of the work are stated. His efforts are directed above all towards systematisation and anthologisation (De Filippis 1948, III-IV). Noting the complexity of navigating through the mass of manuscript editions and copies of riddles that circulated in the modern age, De Filippis first states his intention to order the material. His narrative therefore proceeds in chronological order and he cites and comments on every known instance of literary riddles, skilfully moving between different sources.

De Filippis' approach, however, focuses on literary manifestations and is almost antagonistic to the ethnologists' focus on the popular forms of riddles, to which he was, through Taylor, also indebted.²² Moreover, he is not interested in the very fertile relationship identified by Novati between popular texts and the press and does not even mention Novati's and Segarizzi's work in his oeuvre. De Filippis' focus on texts is always philological and never includes considerations concerning the uses of texts and the dynamics of their production and circulation or their social functions.²³ The focus always favours famous authors and chooses to give greater prominence to the more literary compositions. Thus, the first volume is, for example, almost entirely devoted to the study of Straparola's riddles, citing other collections almost exclusively in order to relate them to the riddles that were later included in *Le piacevoli notti* or, conversely, to prove that Straparola had not used them.

This attribution work is always carried out with extreme care and prompts De Filippis to reflect on the debt of foreign authors to Straparola. Studying the relationship with Pierre de Larivey, among the first French translators of *Le piacevoli notti*, De Filippis constructs tables of correspondences, showing where Larivey made use of Straparola's riddles and where he drew instead on other sources (1948, 30-71).

De Filippis' work, even if its methodological horizons have now been partly surpassed, remains invaluable. This is not only because he was the first scholar to touch upon a field of study that had practically never been dealt with before (apart from the few forays already mentioned), but also because of the collecting work he did in addition to the critical one. The volumes are in fact accompanied by extensive indexes, arranging the cited riddles by subject and author. These volumes thus offer a valuable basis for those wishing to analyse this production, making it easy to reflect on the recurrence of the same themes in the compositions, of the same riddles in different contexts and helping to shed light on the relationships between authors and texts.

4. *From De Filippis to the Present*

De Filippis' work, as Beatrice Corrigan noted, was essentially the first historiographic study on the subject of Italian riddles in the modern age.²⁴ More than fifty years after the publication of the third and final volume of the series, we can say that it has remained the only one. This histo-

²² Significantly, the bibliography within which De Filippis orients himself is very small. In total, between sources and literature, he cites no more than 80 works.

²³ De Filippis immediately makes it clear that he did not want to deal with popular riddles (identifying these with prose compositions), concentrating only with literary witnesses, often in sonnets, sometimes in octaves, but always in verse (1948, 8).

²⁴ 'Curiously enough, there has been hitherto no history of the literary riddle in Italy, Pitre having concerned himself with the riddle in general, and principally with the folk riddle. Yet it is an important subject for the light it throws on the reading and social tastes of the ages in which the riddles appeared, on literary style, and on the dissemination abroad of Italian literature' (Corrigan 1950, 188). Corrigan also reviewed, and praised, the second volume (1954); the third was reviewed in particular by Lena Ferrari (1969).

riographical gap is filled in part by works that have moved to the margins of the topic at hand and that today offer those who wish to deal with these texts useful tools with which to proceed.

In the years in which De Filippis was writing, a bibliography of riddles was published by Aldo Santi, a bibliophile and passionate puzzler (Santi 1952). However, it was not the work of a bibliographer, and it presents serious problems: for instance, the author does not always refer to catalogues or to the institutions that preserve the documents he cites. In addition, the bibliography is too vast and has the ambition of surveying riddles from all over the world, and from the fifteenth century up to the twentieth. The perhaps overly optimistic bibliography cannot be considered an exhaustive or perfect work, but it does offer an initial tool from which to start if one wants to approach the subject.²⁵

A few articles have also been written in the field of literary studies, in particular an essay by Andrea Torre on the riddle production of Giulio Cesare Croce. The subject, which deserves special attention, has never been explored in depth in studies of the Bolognese *cantastorie*, and Torre's piece is the only one available today for those who wish to delve deeper into the subject (Torre 2006). Other studies relate to the translations of Giovan Francesco Straparola's literary work, with particular attention to the rendering of riddles. The topic had already been addressed by De Filippis – and previously sketched out by Rua (1898) – but modern scholars make no reference to these two authors, ignoring their role and merits. Attention has been drawn to Spanish translations of Straparola's enigmas (Federici 2011; Resta 2021) and the French version, first translated by Jean Louveau, then by Pierre de Larivey (Iounes Vona 2020 and 2021).

In short, the historiography is decidedly scarce. Not only has the topic been the subject of very few studies (especially when compared to the medieval age, for which the *Indovinello veronese* has stimulated an extensive literature), but it has also been treated from purely literary perspectives.²⁶

5. *Unseen Perspectives on the Margins of Known Paths*

Riddles, with the documents that allowed them to circulate, have not been studied from the perspective of modern book history, which has been profoundly renewed since the 1980s as a result of impetus from subaltern studies.

This trend of studies flourished in Italy especially from the 1960s, grafting on Ernesto De Martino's researches and drawing strength from Gramsci's theories.²⁷ Similar attention, which, as Arnaldo Momigliano noted, heavily characterised an entire historiographical season, gradually changed, leaving however an important inheritance: the understanding that even the subaltern classes are capable of producing or elaborating original cultural phenomena, not only by acquiring them passively, but also by sharing them with the hegemonic classes.²⁸

²⁵ Santi, however, ignores the work of De Filippis, though he knows and praises the work of Taylor. On the other hand, a divulgative work is *Storia dell'enigmistica* (Rossi 1971), which offers a bird's-eye view of the history of the production of puzzles. The latter work, stemming from a popularising intent, at least has the merit of having taken up De Filippis' studies and adapted them to the different communicative context, thus offering accurate and documented information.

²⁶ For a bibliography of studies on the *Indovinello veronese*, see note 3. See also a recent volume on riddles in the oeuvre of the great authors of early Italian literature (Lazzerini 2010).

²⁷ The role of De Martino (Angelini 2008) and Gramsci (Hobsbawm 1995; Vacca 2002) was remarkable. In spite of their influence abroad, their role was especially relevant in Italy. In fact, as Roger Chartier noted in a very lucid essay in a volume on the history of historiography edited by Philippe Poirriere, cultural history, although moving from international trends and taking on super-local characteristics, expresses its own features depending on the area of production, connecting to the historiographic tradition of each place (2010).

²⁸ Momigliano wrote that: 'la caratteristica più pervasiva della storiografia degli ultimi quindici anni è forse l'attenzione ai gruppi oppressi e/o minoritari nell'interno delle civiltà più avanzate: donne, bambini, schiavi, uomini

Historiography arrived at such acquisitions thanks to works carried out on several fronts by leading historians (Ginzburg, Zemon Davies, Darnton and Chartier above all). Their research undermined the widespread idea that the subaltern classes could not produce autonomous cultural phenomena but were destined to receive passive nourishment from the culture of the elites. Especially since the 1980s, historians have therefore been able to show the relationships that existed during the modern period between 'high' and 'low' culture, breaking the logic of inclusion/exclusion that informed the previously produced historiography on popular literature.²⁹

In the history of books, more and more space has therefore been given to publishing genres considered to be minor (such as almanacs, gazettes, devotional books, etc.), which for centuries attested to a shared culture, participated in by the popular classes but also read by the elites (Braidà 1989).

Even within this research, however, riddles have been almost completely ignored. And while some mention has been made of these materials (Castillo Gómez 2010), a comprehensive analysis of who produced them, who printed them, how they circulated and how they were used is lacking. Such a study would help to better understand the world of cities and the countryside in the early modern age, shedding light on dynamics and actors that often remain in the shadows and are instead typical of cultural and social contexts.

As historiography has shown, it was in fact around writings like these that almost the entire reading experience of the common people revolved, writings that were often much more akin to pamphlets and broadsheets than they were to books (Chartier 1988). On the other hand, looking at the production, this literature was vital to the business of dozens of printers and publishers, who were able to finance expensive and demanding publishing projects precisely thanks to the very frequent sale of small books of this tenor.

6. *Shaping a Literary and Publishing Genre*

Summarising, riddles have not yet been studied by modern book history for any geographical area or cultural context. The work to be done is therefore challenging and here, in addition to raising the issue, we intend to suggest some useful approaches for future research.

Among the first questions that should be clarified is that of the definition of the object of analysis. What in fact is a riddle? As often happens, this process of recognition is not simple. Adopting rigid identification criteria might clarify the field of analysis, yet it would certainly impoverish it. Moreover, given the ambiguous nature of this production, the path of rigour seems even less opportune. It would undoubtedly lead to artificial selections, unconnected with the way such texts were conceived, produced and consumed in the context of the modern age.

In fact, riddles are texts with a long tradition: during the Middle Ages and the early modern age, different types of riddles were already known, which had different functions and users. Riddles circulated in verse (initially mainly in the sonnet, then increasingly in *ottava rima*), or in prose, or in dialogue form. Riddles were produced in vernacular and in Latin, and there were some with figurative parts and other wholly textual ones. Each of these riddle typologies has its own history,

di colore, o più semplicemente eretici, contadini, operai' (1977, 596). (Perhaps the most pervasive trait of historiography in the past fifteen years has been the focus on oppressed and/or minority groups within the most advanced civilizations: women, children, slaves, men of color, or more simply heretics, peasants, workers).

²⁹ For a theoretical framework useful to retrace the main phases of historiography on these themes, see the overview offered by Lodovica Braidà (1989). On the subsequent developments in the history of the book we refer instead to a more recent essay by the same author (2010).

and each of these histories is intertwined with the others, making it difficult to make clear distinctions. Instead of the rigid definitions sometimes offered in studies, we prefer here to adopt a more flexible principle, capable of adapting better to the variety of literary production in the modern age.³⁰

It is therefore useful to look at the definition offered in the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* of the term *enigma*, which is eloquently associated with the term *riddle*, testifying once again to its semantic fluidity of the sixteenth century. According to the *Vocabolario*, a riddle is an allusive question to be presented to someone so that they can find the solution.³¹ This simple definition allows us to delimit the field of study (excluding, for example, rebuses and figured games, which were very common in sixteenth-century Italy) and is sufficient to introduce the perhaps most significant element accompanying these texts: their social nature.

During the modern age, these games were not usually meant to be read in solitude, to test one's intuition or analytical finesse (as happens today). Rather, they were literature to be shared, to be read aloud in convivial moments and company, or to be performed in public squares especially to amuse.

These characteristics are denoted by the very titles and subtitles of the collections that were sold in short, paltry dossiers, which often alluded to the uses for which they were intended. One reads, for example, on the title page of the *Indovinello nuovo*, that its contents would be 'soggetti da indovinare per trastularsi in compagnia. Cosa molto ridicolosa per dar piacere a ogni convito' (*Indovinello nuovo* [c. 1594]).³² Similar allusions can also be found in other publications, for instance in *Indovinelli. Opera piacevole et ridicolosa per trattenimento d'huomini & di donne su le veglie* (1590); and, in general, almost all the pamphlets printed in the sixteenth century feature frontispieces with similar phrases. These were therefore texts that were read in collective moments of leisure, but also of learning, which, during the modern age, sometimes represented an opportunity to encounter literature and remained central to the associative life of European communities until the mid-twentieth century.³³

Something useful for identifying these texts and the ways in which they were disseminated can also be understood through their authors. Usually, those who produced these compositions and promoted their circulation came from that peculiar world of street poets, singers, charlatans and common people who managed to connect the world of the court and that of the public square, to entertain both learned and illiterate people. Among the major riddle writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for example, are two of the most characteristic figures of the period: Angelo Cenni, a Siense blacksmith better known by the name of *Resoluto* and founder of the *Congrega dei Rozzi*, and Giulio Cesare Croce, a blacksmith in his youth who gradually converted to the profession of *cantastorie*.

³⁰ In Italian historiography, a very strict distinction is made between 'riddle' and 'enigma': an enigma is supposedly a literary composition, while a riddle is a simple question that is obscure, allusive or difficult to solve (Pitrè 1897, xvii). For a definition of the various riddle games, see Rossi 1971, 43.

³¹ 'Dicesi anche indovinello, ma più propriamente indovinello, è una proposta oscura, fatta ad altrui, acciocch'egli abbia ad assottigliar lo 'ngegno, per cavarne il vero senso'. (Also called riddle, but more specifically, a riddle is an obscure proposition made to others, so that they have to sharpen their wits in order to grasp the true sense of it). The entry in the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, printed in Venice in 1612, can be found at: <<https://accademiadellacrusca.it/it/contenuti/vocabolario-1612/7449>>, accessed on 1 February 2024.

³² (subjects to guess at in company for fun. A very ridiculous thing to give pleasure at every banquet).

³³ On similar issues in the modern age we refer to the work of Marina Roggero, who has acutely highlighted the practices of collective reading and circulation of literature (especially leisure and chivalric-themed) in Italy (2006 and 2021). However, traces of such practices can also be found throughout the nineteenth century up to the first half of the twentieth century (Revelli 2016, 33-34).

In the early sixteenth century, it was especially the Congrega dei Rozzi who produced this literature in sonnets (often *caudati* or *bicaudati* [tailed or two-tailed sonnets]) and collected it over the century in various editions. Subsequently, it was above all Croce, who used to read them in the piazza, accompanied by his music, who produced an astonishing number of them, often in *ottava rima*, saturating the Italian market in the early seventeenth century. The literary production and practices that characterise the Congrega dei Rozzi on the one hand, and Croce on the other, together with the number of editions in which these riddles were collected, in themselves demonstrate the breadth of the audience to which they appealed, the reasons why they were produced and the aims they pursued.³⁴

To identify the extent of the phenomenon of interest to us here, it is now appropriate to look directly at the documents. There were many editions of riddles, which appeared under the most diverse titles during the sixteenth century. In addition to the presence of riddles and similar compositions in the margins of works of a literary nature or of the most disparate genres – which were very frequent and served to embellish other texts – one finds, especially from the 1530s onwards, a vast number of collections of riddles. These collections seem to share at least material characteristics with each other, making the object of study extremely homogeneous from this point of view. The texts in question here are collected in very poor editions of a size that is anything but large (often in 8°, in other cases in 16°, sometimes in even smaller formats). In the printing houses they were produced without effort and had no decorative motifs at all. Although it is difficult to go into detail in this respect, they were very cheap and could be purchased at very low prices, as evidenced by their small size and poor state.

7. *Research Problems and Future Paths*

But how can these documents be studied? Firstly, it is worth reflecting on the retrieval difficulty that still characterises the genre. The material characteristics described above lead to a first problem, the fact that such editions are often not preserved or have suffered serious damage.³⁵ They are therefore very hard to study, both because they are often not preserved, but also because, when preserved, they are difficult to find in catalogues. Extremely significant in this regard is the case of Angelo Cenni's *Sonetti*. The *editio princeps*, the first printed collection of vernacular riddles, was thought to have been lost and only very recently has it been possible to find a surviving copy (Francalanci 2023).

In fact, editions, often bearing incomplete bibliographical data, are not easy to find in online catalogues. The author is often omitted, and the printer and the date of printing hardly ever appears. To find a trace of them, one must therefore carefully sift through catalogues (both Italian and foreign, since book collectors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century took many editions abroad), searching by keywords for the titles of the works. The task is not easy and often the search does not yield the desired results. Bibliographies produced in the spirit of Segarizzi's are therefore useful, and though they do not offer complete tools, they continue to be solid bases from which to proceed.

³⁴ Even though Cenni and Croce are among the most studied figures of the time, there are very few studies devoted to this particular branch of their production. And yet their works were extremely successful, leading to imitations and contributing to the construction of a true publishing genre. For now, see the biographical entries on these figures (Calabresi 1979; Strappini 1985).

³⁵ The relationship between materiality of documents and preservation histories, which Novati also noted, is now a classic theme of book history, on which historiography has questioned itself on several occasions (Tavoni 1997; Rozzo 2008).

Among the problems that early twentieth-century historiography took into consideration and then completely abandoned are issues relating to the materiality of documents. In this field, historiography made significant progress during the twentieth century, moving beyond the study of extrinsic features and examining the social functions of documents, the types of use made of them and the ways in which they were used (Petrucci 1979; McKenzie 1986). It would be possible to completely reconsider the production of riddles from these very same approaches, which have never been used to look at riddles.

Like the documents in which it was written, this literature was not considered prestigious. The authors used to hide their names behind pseudonyms or promote their works as anonymous.³⁶ The issues of authorship and anonymity are today at the centre of historiographical debate, and an analysis of these texts from this perspective would undoubtedly add important elements to our knowledge of the world of modern literature (Braida 2019).

In this sense, one of the most interesting editions is the *Accademia di enigmi in sonnetti di Madonna Dafne di Piazza*, first printed in Venice in 1552 for the bookseller and publisher Stefano Alessi (Di Piazza 1552). A debate as to the identity of the author was already under way in the nineteenth century. In his *Dizionario di opere anonime e pseudonime*, Gaetano Melzi, who was only familiar with the second edition of Piazza's work (1561), retraces some of the hypotheses that were put forward regarding the identity of Madonna Dafne, attempting to bring some order to the confusion that had arisen around the attribution of this work (Melzi 1848, 272). Melzi reports Crescimbeni's opinions, who in his *Istoria della volgar poesia* (1698) attributed some of Madonna Dafne's sonnets to Antonio Alamanni, thus making their identity coincide. Melzi notes that Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni's analysis is based on the study of an edition of sonnets that contains not only Alamanni's work, but works by other authors as well, including Burchiello and Angelo Cenni (1568). The sonnets identified by Crescimbeni would appear to have been by Cenni, and Melzi was already inclined not to identify Alamanni as the true author of the *Accademia di Enigmi*.³⁷

Adding to these notes the considerations contained in De Filippis' work, which highlights the correspondence between the riddles of Madonna Dafne and those collected in *Le piacevoli notti*, one hypothesis that emerges powerfully is that Dafne Di Piazza was a compiler more than an author. It seems highly probable that the texts collected came largely (and perhaps exclusively) from other collections, perhaps no longer known today.

It is necessary to introduce one of the features that most characterised this production of riddles and that probably made it difficult to claim the works as one's own in the Counter-Reformation context. The texts we are looking at are in fact constellated with vulgar and offensive allusions, filth and obscenities of every kind, which were intended to generate laughter and merriment among bystanders in order to meet with the highest possible approval.³⁸ It is likely that these characteristics of the riddles hindered the printing of the poems (especially in the years of the Counter-Reformation, when control over book circulation became more stringent), compromising their preservation.

³⁶ Even in the second edition *Dialogo de' Giuochi che nelle vegghie sanesi si usano di fare* by Girolamo Bargagli, who appears on the title page with the name he assumed within the Accademia degli Intronati, namely *Materiale*, we find some interesting testimony. The printer, in his foreword to readers, publicly apologised, complaining that his edition had not been revised by the author and was therefore not as correct as it could have been. In fact, *Materiale* had taken up the legal profession by this time and no longer wanted to recognise the work as having been produced by him, fearing it would discredit him (Bargagli 1574, A2r-A2v).

³⁷ For more about Alamanni, a Florentine poet famous for work in the style of Burchiello, see his biography (Ricci 1960).

³⁸ Giuseppe Pitre also stresses these characteristics, which seem to be common to riddles produced in cultures all over the world (1897, xxii).

Through this literature, one can also learn more about the publishers and printers who lived off these works, and in this context it is necessary to mention a particularly obscure figure: Damon Fido Pastore. Not much is known about him, and he is sometimes identified as a travelling printer (Bertolo 1997, 361), and in other cases (probably more accurately) as an itinerant publisher (Ricca 2013, 324).

In his case, however, one can speak of a true specialist in the publishing genre of the riddle collection. Damon Fido's collections, published in four editions and printed in three different cities, represent 50 per cent of his known output today.³⁹ Although we are clearly not dealing with one of the most prolific publishers of the period, the figure is significant. It becomes even more so when considering that Damon Fido used to add riddles at the foot of works containing other texts, probably in an attempt to entice buyers and diversify the offer within a single edition (*Opera nuova* [1540-1560]).⁴⁰

In short, figures such as Damon Fido show that in addition to the literary aspects of riddles, one must also bear in mind the more strictly editorial ones, which carried their own weight for those in sixteenth-century society who were dedicated to printing these works and had to sell them. These considerations can tell us something about the agents of the circulation of this literature and help shed some light on the large number of half-forgotten publishers and printers who populated the cities of sixteenth-century Italy.

But if riddles in verse served to ensure the livelihood of printers and publishers such as Damon Fido, even more useful must have been the collections of riddles in question-and-answer form, which in the sixteenth century enjoyed a very wide circulation. A simple search of online catalogues shows that similar collections were widespread, being printed in several editions and several times over. In addition to the *Indovinello nuovo* already mentioned at the beginning of this work, the collection *Indovinelli, et riboboli* is also interesting in this regard. Many editions (with additions and subtractions from time to time) were produced of this collection of riddles, proverbs and tongue twisters. The first of these (*Indovinelli, et riboboli. Opera piacevole* [1550]) must date back to the 1550s, the last known to us (*Indovinelli riboboli* 1615) is from the seventeenth century.

Let us return now to Giulio Cesare Croce. It is important to emphasise a correspondence, unknown to historiography, between the Florentine collection just mentioned (*Indovinelli riboboli*) and *Le sottilissime astuzie di Bertoldo*, Croce's masterpiece, published in 1606.⁴¹ In the amusing dialogues that Bertoldo has with King Alboin, we see exchanges of jokes in the form of a question and answer between the sovereign and his interlocutor. Among these are many passages derived precisely from the popular culture that Croce nurtured.

In some cases, however, there is a repetition of motifs already present in the Florentine collection *Indovinelli riboboli*. For example, in its first edition there is a riddle that plays on the ambiguity of the term 'fiore', which means 'flower', but in the agronomic lexicon also identifies

³⁹ As The National Census of Sixteenth-Century Italian Editions (Edit16) reports, there were four editions of riddle collections by Damon Fido (*Artificiosi et dilettevoli sonetti* 1541; *Enigme volgari* 1543; *Sonetti fatti da indovinare* 1543; *Sonetti molti artificiosi* 1543).

⁴⁰ This strategy was not original, and similar cases were found very frequently. A related example is that of the Florentine collection *La pastorella* (1576), which, on the sidelines of several amusing vernacular texts with an amorous theme, includes two riddles in sonnets. An investigation of these hybridisations might certainly lead to original results showing how this literature circulated.

⁴¹ On this work by Croce, see Camporesi's essay introducing the edition of the text (1978). The bibliography on Croce is vast. Despite the profusion of writings, only one study is known to have been devoted to his enigmas (Torre 2006), though they are briefly mentioned in a study about the presence of images in popular Italian editions of the sixteenth century (Carnevali 2019).

a particular mould. The riddle reads: ‘Qual è quel fiore che l’huomo à più a noia? Quel del vino perché la botte si è vota’ (*Indouinelli, et riboboli. Opera piacevole* [1550], A2r).⁴² We find the same theme in one of Bertoldo’s *sottigliezze*. The following is an excerpt from a dialogue between Bertoldo and King Alboin, in which we read:

Re. Qual è il più tristo fiore che sia?

Bertoldo. Quello che esce dalla botte quando si finisce il vino.⁴³

The exchange between King Alboin and Bertoldo continues in this vein for several pages, drawing on motifs already present in different collections.

The case is certainly not isolated, as Giovan Francesco Straparola also seems to draw material from lesser-known collections of more humble authors, copying especially from the Angelo Cenni’s collections. It is therefore worth returning to the correspondences between the printed collections of mottos and riddles – with which, as we have said, modern cities must have been awash – and the literary production of some of the most famous writers of the sixteenth century, who, if they did not belong to ‘high’ cultural circles, were certainly among the protagonists of the literary scene in Renaissance cities.⁴⁴ The likes of Giulio Cesare Croce and Giovan Francesco Straparola, imitators and imitated, used and heard this literature of ridiculous riddles on a daily basis and drew material from it for their works.

In some cases, the work of comparison has already been carried out by De Filippis, who mapped the presence of the poems in various collections. The methodological tools available to us today and the new sensibilities of historical studies, however, permit a deeper analysis. Above all, it would be worthwhile to connect literary riddles to prose riddles to reflect on the intermingling of different genres and to explore the themes of the history of communication, connected to that of literary production. The transmission of these texts, both in verse and prose, took place thanks to complex media interactions, which enriched the communicative scope of the compositions and which allowed these writings to be placed within one of the most flourishing currents of study today, the reflection on the outcomes and dynamics of media plurality.⁴⁵ Often, in fact, works that were printed in dossiers comprising just a few, paltry sheets, also circulated in manuscript copies, perhaps written in haste while being read by a *canterino* in the public square or privately put into writing, with mnemonic efforts that led to reworkings that were sometimes even important.

In the introduction to the recent volume, *Crossing Borders, Crossing Cultures*, the authors pick up on themes dear to the historiography of the 1980s and 1990s, and emphasise the need felt by historians and book historians today to consider popular writings no longer from a localist perspective, but from a broad and integrated perspective. Such a view, they point out, bears in mind that each text lives many lives (Rospocher, Salman and Salmi 2019).

⁴² (What is the flower that most annoys man? That of wine, because the cask is empty).

⁴³ For the transcription, we have relied on the text edited by Piero Camporesi (Croce 1978, 35). We also refer to Camporesi’s essay introducing the work of Croce (Camporesi 1978, ix–lxii). (King. Which is the saddest flower? Bertoldo. That which comes out of the cask when there is no more wine).

⁴⁴ Of continuing pertinence today is an observation made by Carlo Ginzburg forty years ago, when he warned of the need to study the relationship between high culture and popular culture without opening them out and considering both to be part of the same cultural system.

⁴⁵ Above all, Anglo-American historiography has been active in this regard in the last decade, repeatedly questioning the interaction between different media in the transmission of official and unofficial information in the sixteenth century (Degl’Innocenti, Richardson and Sbordoni 2016; Dall’Aglia, Richardson and Rospocher 2017).

The brief notes offered so far, however, are only meant to raise some of the problems that these riddles pose and that deserve in-depth analysis. The relationships between the texts of different collections; the relationship between street poetry and auteur poetry (and *vice versa*); the editorial strategies with which the collections were promoted; the agents behind the distribution; the relationship with censorship. These are questions that have not been addressed by historiography, at least regarding this category of texts, and it is work that we hope to pursue in future publications.

If this proposed analysis were to be conducted in a systematic manner, it would undoubtedly benefit historical and literary studies, the network of publishing production could be better understood, and we could shed light on men, women and document types that have so far remained at the margins of book history.

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The Saga of Lohodann Making Sense of an Annobonese Folktale Rooted in Carolingian Drama

Jeroen Dewulf

University of California, Berkeley (<jdewulf@berkeley.edu>)

Abstract

The essay analyzes the saga of Lohodann in relation to the idiosyncratic cultural and religious history of the African Atlantic island of Annobón. It does so by placing the history of the island in the context of the Portuguese expansion in Africa during the early modern era, and studies the folktale in connection to the dissemination of Iberian cultural elements in the region. It pays special attention to the role of confraternities, in the context of which the population of Annobón reinvented and reimagined Iberian culture from an African perspective.

Keywords: Annobón, Catholicism, Charlemagne, Portugal, São Tomé & Príncipe

Every third year, the population of the small African island of Annobón gathers for three consecutive days during Holy Week to hear the saga of Lohodann, recited from memory in the local Luso-African creole language Fa d'Ambun. An intriguing characteristic of this tradition is that the initial storyline of Lohodann follows to a large extent the birth and youth of the Carolingian knight Roland, as it was first recorded in the fourteenth-century *Geste Francor*. This story reached the Iberian Peninsula in the early modern era via the *Reali di Francia*, from where it travelled to Africa. In fact, the hero's name Lohodann (or Lodá) corresponds to the local pronunciation of the Iberian Roldán/Roldão. Even more intriguing is the story's ending; rather than a heroic death on the battlefield of Roncesvalles, Lohodann's life ends after a mission to hell in pursuit of a witch, and the subsequent stabbing of all unworthy Christians at a church service. This curious ending indicates the degree to which the saga of Roland was adapted to local culture, which allowed this key figure in the Matter of France to become an African hero.

In this article, I will attempt to provide a better understanding of the saga of Lohodann in connection with the idiosyncratic cultural and religious history of Annobón. I will also relate

the case of Lohodann to similar cultural traditions deriving from Carolingian literature that thrive on the nearby islands of São Tomé and Príncipe. In order to explain the fascination for European medieval chivalric literature on these African Atlantic islands, I will analyze the religious culture of Annobón in parallel to that of other parts of Africa that experienced a strong Portuguese influence during the early modern era. I will do so by focusing on the importance of Afro-Catholic lay confraternities, in the context of which people reinvented and reimagined Iberian culture and religion from an African perspective.

1. *Annobón*

The name Annobón derives from the Portuguese *Ano Bom* (Good Year), a designation for the first of January, the day on which a Portuguese expedition, probably around 1480, first sighted this uninhabited island in the Gulf of Guinea. Since the Portuguese chose different islands in the region as their centers of operation, first São Tomé and later Príncipe, it took several decades before the exploitation of Annobón began. During that time, the authorities had come to realize that the small number of Portuguese settlers in São Tomé – mainly banished men and New Christians – would be unable to keep control over the quickly growing numbers of enslaved Africans who were taken there from the continent. They dealt with this challenge by establishing a hierarchy within the Black community that, in exceptional cases, could lead to freedom. Being Black in São Tomé was thus not tantamount to being enslaved. Ascending the hierarchy within the population of African descent went hand in hand with the display of acts of loyalty to Portugal, as well as the adoption of Portuguese identity markers, most notably the language and religion. On an island where there were virtually no European women, this system naturally privileged the offspring of Portuguese men and African women. According to an anonymous sixteenth-century source, such relationships were an accepted practice in São Tomé because ‘os habitantes negros são de grande inteligência e riqueza, criando as suas filhas ao nosso modo, tanto nos costumes como no trajos’ (in Caldeira 2000, 104).¹ Over time, this practice resulted in a slave society that, besides a Portuguese upper class, also included an increasingly numerous Black, predominantly Mulatto, elite (Henriques 2000, 64-92).

By the mid-sixteenth century, a small group of Portuguese and/or Luso-Africans began colonizing Annobón with enslaved African laborers. While some of the latter may have had roots in the region of Benin, the majority likely originated from the Kongo region. Considering that the creole language of Annobón is similar to that of São Tomé, it is assumed that these men and women had previously lived or were even born on São Tomé, which implies that they were subjected to Christianization before their arrival (Caldeira 2009).

The first inhabitants were accompanied by priests, who ensured that a church was erected in what was to become the island’s capital, Santo António da Praia, today known as Palé(a). In 1592, a Portuguese governor, a schoolmaster, and a (Black) priest were sent from São Tomé to Annobón. The latter did not stay permanently. Only five years later, the bishop of São Tomé promised the Pope that he would cater to the population of Annobón by sending a priest to the island annually to hear confessions and perform sacraments. The absence of a permanent priest indicates the lack of investment the Portuguese authorities were willing to make in Annobón, where the profits to be made from cultivating products for the European market remained low (De Wulf 2014, vol. I, 74-115).

¹ (the Negro population is both intelligent and rich, and they raise their daughters in our way of life, as regards both custom and dress). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the author.

While early modern Portuguese documents contain little information about daily life on the island, we learn more through Dutch sources. In 1598, the Dutch captain Sebald de Weert, on his way to Asia, tried to restock in Annobón but was attacked by ‘eenigehe Portugesen ende veel Swarten’ (Commelin 1969, vol. II, 12-15).² When his forces retaliated, the islanders resorted to guerilla tactics. Disgruntled by the continuous resistance, De Weert withdrew from the island. In 1602, the Dutch admiral Wybrandt van Waerwijck had a similar experience. He reported that ‘den gouverneur is een Portugees, niet boven 3 ofte 4 witten bij hem hebbende de reste sijn Mooren hem onderdanich ende de Roomsche Catholijcke religie toegedaen’ (6).³ In 1605, the Dutch admiral Cornelis Matelief received a different reception. He was welcomed by ‘40 oft 60 swarte mannen ende twee witte voor gouverneurs’.⁴ During his stay, Matelief held a church service and ‘oock eenighe swarten ende mulatten quamen die haer vertwonderden ... datse den naem Iesu Christi hoorden ... want sy meenden ... dat de onse Lutheranen waren die in de duyvel geloofden’.⁵ Matelief thereupon invited two Black men to his table for lunch, which displeased the governor because ‘op dit eiland zijn naer gissinge over de 200 soo swarten als swartinnen ende niet meer als alleenlijk twee Portugesen soo dat men met weinich moeyte dit eiland soude kunnen doen rebelleren’ (vol. III, 3-4).⁶ In the late seventeenth century, the Dutch merchant Willem Bosman visited Annobón and referred to the inhabitants as ‘halve Christenen, alhoewel zy de naem van heele dragen; want sose maer een Pater Noster en een Ave Maria konnen leesen / by de Paep te Biegten gaen / en eenige Offerhanden meede brengen / so gaense voor goede Christenen door’ (Bosman 1704, vol. II, 205).⁷ He also met with two Capuchins, who ‘noodigden ons / om hun Kerken, die twee in ’t getal waren / te koomen besien: ’t geen geschiedde; en wy vonden deselve proper en wel; oock groot genoeg / om viermael so veel Menschen, als op het Eiland waren / te bergen’ (207).⁸

Most of the information about what happened in later decades comes from Catholic missionaries, who either visited the island from São Tomé and Príncipe or served on ships that stopped in Annobón to restock. The Order of Friars Minor Capuchin, whose missionaries had been visiting the island since the mid-seventeenth century, attempted to establish a permanent mission between 1724 and 1753, but these efforts failed. From their reports, we learn that the local population identified as Catholic, but had developed its own variant of Catholicism by blending late-medieval Portuguese Catholic traditions with indigenous African beliefs and rituals. We also learn that, by the eighteenth century, there were no Portuguese left and that the local population had developed its own system of government, centered around the three key positions that had formerly been introduced onto the island: *capitão-mor* (governor or chief captain), *sacristão* (head sacristan), and *mestre escola* (schoolmaster), who, together, formed the *Vidjil Gandji* or Great Council. Portuguese attempts to send Catholic missions to the island

² (a few Portuguese and a lot of Black people).

³ (the governor is a Portuguese with not more than 3 or 4 white people on his side, the rest are Moors, who are subject to him and are Roman Catholics).

⁴ (40 to 60 black men and two white governors).

⁵ (some black and mulatto people also attended who were surprised ... to hear the name of Jesus Christ ... because they thought that we, Lutherans, worship the devil).

⁶ (on this island live some 200 male and female black people and only two Portuguese, so it would be easy for them to rebel).

⁷ (half Christians, although they bear the name of full ones; because if only they can say a Pater Noster and an Ave Maria, confess to the popish priest, and bring some offerings with them, they pass for good Christians).

⁸ (invited us to come and see their two churches, which we did, and found them clean and in good state, large enough for four times the number of inhabitants of the island).

to regain control failed. While these missionaries were generally welcomed, they experienced hostility as soon as they tried to question local traditions. Even the 1770 mission led by two African priests from São Tomé, who could communicate in the local language, ended in failure (Matos 1916, 63-88; Caldeira 2007 and 2008; De Wulf 2014, vol. I, 135-136 and vol. II, 23-28; De Wulf 2019).

In 1778, Portugal sealed a deal with Spain over disputed borderlands of its Brazilian colony, in exchange for which the islands of Fernando Po (today's Bioko) and Annobón were handed over to the Spanish. During these negotiations, Portugal had remained silent over the fact that it had no control over the population of Annobón, a fact which hampered the imposition of Spanish rule (Matos 1916, 88-91; De Wulf 2014, vol. I, 254-282). The population refused to accept the new reality and when the first Spanish delegation arrived, the local women expressed their discontent by staging a 'procesión con crucifijos, Santos, calaveras y otros huesos humanos' (Cencillo 1948, 106).⁹ It was not until 1843 that Spain effectively took possession of the island. When its first governor arrived in 1858, Besabé de la Puente expressed surprise about 'la constancia con que aquellas infelices gente han permanecido fieles a los principios de la Religión Católica ... si bien mezclados con algunas formas ridículas y supersticiosas'.¹⁰ He also reported that they had chosen their own priest and that 'los días, meses y años los apuntan con unos palos y tabletas por medio de rayas hechos con cuchillos' (in De Wulf 1998, 41-42).¹¹

After the establishment of a Jesuit mission in the 1860s had failed, a large Claretian mission arrived in 1885. The latter were initially excited about the population's attachment to Catholic traditions. However, as soon as they attempted to impose Catholic orthodoxy, the mood changed. The Claretians tried to break the resistance by burning down local chapels, the main church, and eventually the entire historical village of Palé in the expectation that people would relocate to a new space under their control. The population refused and found an ally in Governor Puente, who had the most radical Claretians removed from the island. The Claretian mission remained in Annobón, yet softened its tactics by switching to education as a strategy to achieve the desired transformation (De Wulf 1997). They only partially succeeded. The population of Annobón has maintained several of its idiosyncratic cultural and religious traditions to this day. One of these is the reciting of the saga of Lohodann during Holy Week.

2. *Lohodann*

The early history of the tale of Lohodann is shrouded in obscurity. There were no written records of it until the Catalan scholar Jacint Creus published the version presented to him by the Annobonese informant Orlando Briones in 1989. Before that, the story had been recited from memory and was passed on among the male members of one particular family, the Cisneros; nobody knows since when.¹² The only background information Creus obtained from Briones

⁹ (procession, carrying crucifixes, images of saints, skulls, and other human bones).

¹⁰ (the constancy with which these unhappy people have remained loyal to the principles of the Catholic Religion ... albeit mixed with some ridiculous and superstitious elements).

¹¹ (They mark the days, months and years with sticks and tablets using lines made with knives).

¹² This tradition is currently in crisis. There were two sons in line to take over the tradition, but both of them died. It has not yet been decided if the only remaining member of the family, a daughter, will be allowed to recite the story in the future or if this tradition will pass on to a male cousin. The author would like to thank Valérie de Wulf and Nánây-Menemôl Lédjam for this information.

was that ‘todo lo que vas a oír ha sucedido de verdad’ (1989, 62).¹³ Creus published two versions of his Spanish translation of the Fa d’Ambun original: a literal one that reproduces Briones’ direct speech (1997) and a narrative version in the form of a tale (1990). A short version of the saga, with some minor alterations, was presented by the Portuguese historian Arlindo Manuel Caldeira (2010), while his French counterpart Valérie de Wulf published a summary of the plot in French translation in her *Histoire de l’île d’Annobón* NO (2014, vol. II, 155). Below is an English summary of the saga, based on Creus’ 1990 version.

Once upon a time, a king called Hala Manyi lived in a palace in the village [of Palé]. He had a daughter, Beedji, whom he kept under close supervision. Several men asked the king for the hand of his daughter but they were all rejected with the argument that only a man with real soldiers would be allowed to marry her. He did not know that Beedji had fallen in love with an old, poor fisherman, who used to pass by the palace. She would give the guards so much alcohol to drink that they fell asleep and smuggle the fisherman into her room. This continued until she got pregnant. Concerned about Hala Manyi’s reaction, the couple fled and ended up living in a cave, where they survived by begging in the surrounding areas. One day, there was heavy rainfall that threatened to flood the cave. Beedji and the fisherman left and, when trying to cross a river, the latter fell and drowned. Beedji then returned to the cave, where she gave birth to a male child whom she called Lohodann. The boy did not cry but, instead, rolled about in the placenta on the ground. In this way, he was able to see everything that happened before he was born and what was going to happen in the future. Already at a young age, Lohodann revealed great strength. One day, he took his father’s cane and rosary and told his mother that he wanted to go to her original house. He passed the river where his father had died, followed the coastline along the beach, and then encountered a group of children. He established himself as their captain and formed a small army with the most courageous ones. Thereafter, he entered Hala Manyi’s palace and took a plate of food from under the king’s nose, which he brought back to the cave. When his mother heard the story, she became scared and refused to eat. Lohodann returned to the palace, where the same scene repeated itself. After his third visit, Hala Manyi’s soldiers followed him and discovered the cave. Lohodann and his mother were brought to the palace, where the former identified himself as the king’s grandson. This was followed by a celebration.

Meanwhile, a man witnessed the landing of foreign warriors on the island. Upon hearing this, Lohodann assembled his twelve boys, who, with their swords, approached the enemy and defeated them. They then saw something that looked like a whale. Upon coming closer, they realized that it was a giant, whom Lohodann defeated after a long battle. This giant happened to be the son of devils. When she heard about her son’s death, the giant’s mother came out of hell and, at midnight, entered the house where Lohodann resided and killed one of the boys. The next day, she killed a second one. When the devil approached the house for a third time, Lohodann stabbed her with his sword. She fled down a ladder back into hell but was pursued by Lohodann, who killed her and then took a tunnel to the beach of Pala Padjil. From there, he walked to the village [of Palé], only to discover that people didn’t remember who he was. Since it was a Sunday, most people were in church. Entering the church, Lohodann took his sword and stabbed everyone, except those who succeeded in proclaiming their faith in God, such as the women Fiip and Filipie. When he reached the high altar, Lohodann put down his sword, knelt down, and sighed ‘Oh, my God!’ He

¹³ (everything you are about to hear has happened in real life).

then requested something to drink from his mother Beedji and she brought a mug of water. While he was drinking the water, Lohodann's body began to fall backwards. As he drank the final sip, his head touched the ground and he died.

3. *From Roland to Lohodann*

The first part of the saga can be characterized as an Annobonese variant of the story about the birth and youth of Charlemagne's paladin Roland, the origins of which can be traced back to the fourteenth-century Franco-Italian *Geste Francor* (Morgan 2009, vol. I, 193-203). In the original version, Charlemagne's half-sister Berta begins a secret relationship with the knight Milon and becomes pregnant. Terrified by the possible consequences, the couple flees to Italy, where Roland is born. There, they live in great poverty in the forest. When Charlemagne visits Italy, he decides to offer food to the poor. Roland goes to the royal palace to get some. Impressed by the boy's courage, Charlemagne allows him to eat as much as he wants and to even take some food home. When his mother realizes the origin of all that food, she tries to prevent Roland from returning to the palace, in vain. During Roland's second visit, Charlemagne's counselor, Duke Naimés, suspects the boy to be of noble extraction. Upon the boy's third visit, he follows Roland into the forest and recognizes his parents. They are subsequently reunited with Charlemagne, who forgives Roland's parents.

The story reappeared, with several alterations, in the late fourteenth-century Italian *Reali di Francia*, which later inspired Iberian authors, including Antonio de Eslava with *Los amores de Milón de Anglante con Berta y el nacimiento de Roldán y sus niñerías* (1604). The latter introduced some new elements, such as Milon's tragic death when crossing a river, which were further developed in the first known Portuguese variant of the story by Jerónimo Moreira de Carvalho in the *História do Imperador Carlos Magno e dos doze Pares da França* (1728).¹⁴

The first part of the Lohodann saga, as recorded by Creus in 1989, largely follows Carvalho's version of the plot, albeit in a different geographical setting and with Berta being Charlemagne's daughter and the knight Milon a fisherman. The second part begins with familiar scenes from the Matter of France that were first disseminated on the Iberian Peninsula in Nicolás de Piamonte's *Hystoria del emperador Carlomagno y de los doce pares de Francia* (1521) and later reappeared in Carvalho's *História*. In fact, Lohodann's battles against foreign invaders and a giant clearly parallel Roland's fight against the giant Ferragús and Olivier's heroic battle against the Saracen giant Fierabras. Moreover, the names Fiip and Fililipie, the two women Lohodann spared during his rampage in church, recall Floripas, Fierabras' sister, who converted to Christianity after falling in love with the paladin Gui de Bourgogne. Following Lohodann's killing of the giant, however, the saga moves away from the traditional storyline with scenes involving a descent to hell and a rampage in church that do not find any parallels in Carolingian literature.

The saga's allusion to the battle between Olivier and Fierabras also points to a parallel with the nearby island of Príncipe. There, a two hour-long enactment of this battle is the highlight of the annual performance of the *Auto de Floripes*. In a similar way to what can be observed on

¹⁴ While no copies of Eslava's play have survived, its plot can be retrieved from chapter 8 of his *Noches de Invierno* (1609). Carvalho's 1728 book is traditionally believed to be a translation of Nicolás de Piamonte's *Hystoria del emperador Carlomagno* (1521). However, the latter does not refer to Roland's birth and youth, whereas Carvalho devotes an entire section to it (Book V of Part 1). Since no original copies of Carvalho's 1728 edition have survived, it is impossible to know whether that section already existed in the original version or was added to the book in a later edition, either by Carvalho himself or by a different author.

Annobón, the dialogues of the protagonists in this play are passed on from father to son and thus remain in the same family. São Tomé, too, has a performance tradition that developed out of Carolingian literature: the tragedy of the Marquis of Mantua and (Roland's cousin) Baldwin. Locally known as the *tchiloli*, this story derives from Baltazar Dias' sixteenth-century Portuguese *Trágedia do Marquês de Mântua e do Imperador Carlos Magno* (Mitras 2004; Seibert 2004).

One could also make a connection to another former Portuguese colony, Brazil, where the performance of Carolingian drama has a long tradition and where, to this day, plays based on the tale of Floripas are staged on specific Catholic holidays. In some places, only the battle scenes between Moors and Christians are performed. These are known as *cheganças* or, if on horses, as *cavalhadas*. They are typically, though not exclusively, associated with the nation's Black population and performed by *congadas*, Catholic lay confraternities that are led by an elected king and named after the region from which the majority of Brazil's African-descendant population originated: Kongo (Cascudo 1979, 242-245; Meyer 1995, 17-60).

This overview raises numerous questions, two of which I will further explore in this essay: how are we to understand the remarkable ending of the saga of Lohodann and how can we explain why African and African-descended people became so fascinated by European chivalric literature? Building on António Ambrósio's theory that an explanation for most cultural expressions on African Atlantic islands with a Portuguese colonial history can be found in the Catholic religion, I will analyze these questions in connection to Portugal's religious influence in Africa during the early modern era (1985, 61). However, I will do so in the awareness that, in spite of its European roots, the saga has become an African tale. This requires a rephrasing of Ambrósio's theory: the key to understanding this remarkable cultural expression is not to be found in the Catholic religion as such, but rather in the idiosyncratic variant(s) of Catholicism that developed on these islands. For this reason, my focus will not be on the Portuguese missionary goals in the region but on the way in which Africans appropriated and reinvented Catholic traditions in strategic and creative ways.

4. Early Modern Portuguese Religious Influences in Africa

In her history of Annobón, De Wulf explained how power structures on the island traditionally centered around the *Vidjil Gandji*, a council composed of a governor, sacristan, and schoolmaster, and concluded that this form of government was completely different from that of the Portuguese (2014, vol. II, 23). Although De Wulf is correct in this assumption, it is important to add that similar structures existed among Luso-African communities established by Portuguese settlers and/or their racially mixed offspring in territories that were claimed by Portugal yet in practice remained without effective control.

This was, for instance, the case with the smaller islands of the Cape Verde archipelago. Several of these islands still did not have a priest in residence in the mid-seventeenth century. Conscious that they were able to make an annual visit at best, priests operating from the main island of Santiago typically selected a number of male teenagers on the smaller islands of the archipelago, whom they introduced to the basics of Catholic doctrine and trained in essential rituals, such as prayer sessions, hymns, funeral customs, and processions. Once their training was completed, these lay catechists, known as *sacristãos* (sacristans) and *mestres-escola* (schoolmasters), enjoyed great moral authority in the community. While the former performed sacraments in accordance with (their understanding of) Catholic doctrine, the latter ensured that people said the right prayers and prepared on time for the upcoming holidays. As an example, we could mention the case of Seis Cento Lobos, a Black man whom the Dutch merchant Hendrik Hae-

cxs met in 1646 on the Cape Verdean island of Maio, and who ‘bediende bij gebreck aen een paep het priesterampt, die ooc bij den Gouverneur geestimeert wiert’ (L’Honoré Naber 1925, 167).¹⁵ It is possible, as George Brooks has suggested, that these sacristans and masters thrived in Cape Verde because the late-medieval form of Portuguese Catholicism they adopted had much in common with indigenous African religions, which encouraged ‘mutual accommodation, acceptance, and syncretism of religious beliefs and practices’ (1984, 2).

Parallels can also be drawn to creole communities established by *lançados*, *tangomaos*, or *pombeiros*, Portuguese and/or Luso-African adventurers, who developed clandestine trading networks on the African continent, where they started relationships with local women and acquired enslaved workers. Although Portuguese control over these Luso-African communities was virtually nil, their leaders presented themselves as subjects of the King of Portugal and took pride in identifying themselves as Catholics. Significantly, they were known in Upper Guinea by the name Kristons. Not unlike African converts to Islam, these Luso-Africans tended to live segregated from pagan Africans, and some acquired literacy (Mark 1999; Carreira 2000, 56-78). In the 1680s, the French explorer Michel Jajolet de la Courbe characterized them as people who ‘parlent encore un certain jargon qui n’a que tres peu de ressemblance a la langue portugaise’ (La Courbe 1913, 192),¹⁶ ‘ont toujours un grand chapelet pendu au col et se nomment du nom d’un saint ... un chapeau, une chemise et une culotte comme les Européens’ (192-193)¹⁷ and ‘quoyqu’ils soient noirs, ils assurent neantmoins qu’ils sont blancs, voulant signifier par là qu’ils sont chrestiens comme les blancs’ (193).¹⁸

Occasionally, a Portuguese or Luso-African priest would, typically during Lent, visit these communities, baptize the newborn, hear confessions, bless marriages, and depart. Since people would often not see a priest for several years, they took the execution of sacraments into their own hands. In 1764, for instance, the French Abbé Demanet visited Kristons in the Gambia and noted that ‘il y avoit plus de vingt ans qu’ils n’avoient vu de Prêtres’¹⁹ and, for this reason, ‘ils tâchoient de remplir les devoirs de la Religion [et] baptisoient tous les enfans qui naissoient’ (1767, vol. I, 122-123).²⁰ Similarly to what was observed with regard to Annobón, these communities had a type of calendar that enabled them to know when Catholic holidays were to be celebrated. Significantly, English explorers in Sierra Leone referred in 1607 to a Luso-African community that had ‘a chapell, wherein are written in a table, suche dayes as they are to observe holy’ (Hair 1978, 29).

The role of sacristans and schoolmasters was typically complemented by that of the *irmandades* or *confrarias*, lay Catholic brotherhoods or (con)fraternities. These mutual aid and burial societies had originally developed in Portugal in response to growing urbanization in the twelfth century by serving as a replacement for the family connections people had left behind in their village of origin. Thus, it was not by accident that confraternity members addressed each other as ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’. New members had to pledge allegiance to the brotherhood’s *compromissos* or statutes. The latter stipulated the election procedure for the *cabido* (board) that promoted a variety of initiatives centering on saint devotion (in particular

¹⁵ (due to the absence of a pope served as priest, in which function he was also respected by the local governor).

¹⁶ (a jargon that only vaguely resembles Portuguese).

¹⁷ (bear the names of saints, have a large chaplet around their neck ... a hat, a shirt, and breeches like the Europeans).

¹⁸ (although they are black, they nevertheless claim to be white, by which they mean that they are Christians, just like white people).

¹⁹ (they had not seen any priests in over twenty years).

²⁰ (they tried to fulfill all the duties of the religion [and] baptized all the children that were born).

that of its *padroeiro/a*, patron saint), the honoring of the dead, the celebration of liturgical feasts, and charity work. Members frequently gathered for prayer sessions known as *ladainhas* (hour-long recitations in a call-and-response form), the singing of *loas* (veneration songs), and the preparation of the annual procession on the patron saint's holiday (Oliveira Marques 1971, 244-276; Beirante 1990, 2-29).

The importance of such rituals needs to be understood in relation to *ex-votos*, the Catholic tradition of expressing gratitude by fulfilling a vow. This practice of vowing is essentially a contractual relationship with a saint in the conviction that prayers alone are insufficient to obtain a saint's grace and that the latter requires the fulfillment of a promise. While this could involve a virtually endless range of activities, a common form of 'payment' was to take part in organizing and staging the saint's feast, which typically involved some type of performance. There was a firm belief that not honoring one's vows or only doing so halfheartedly could have disastrous consequences, not just for oneself but also for one's relatives, friends, or community.

Membership of a confraternity also represented a form of 'death insurance', in the sense that the dutiful payment of fees guaranteed a decent funeral, burial space, and coffin, as well as spiritual attention after one's passing. This dedication to the souls of the deceased coincided with the dissemination of the doctrine of purgatory as an intermediate place between hell and heaven for those who died in God's grace but were insufficiently pure to achieve eternal salvation. People believed that Christians would only in exceptional cases go straight to hell or heaven and that the living could influence the redemption of souls in purgatory through manifestations of devotion, penance, and charity. By assuming these tasks, brotherhoods functioned as intermediaries between the living and the dead.

People feared that passing away without confession and viaticum resulted in a tormented soul, and so great efforts were made to receive the last rites from a priest. Once a person had passed away, the brotherhood ensured that a coffin was provided, *círios* (wax candles) were lit, and that all the necessary rituals were honored, such as keeping vigil over the corpse and observing seven or eight days of mourning, during which time friends and relatives joined family members in prayers to commend the deceased's soul to God. Another task was the completion of vows that had remained unfulfilled in the event of a sudden death. It was believed that for as long as such vows remained unfulfilled, the soul remained in pain and kept haunting the living (Espírito Santo 1981, 181-196; Vilar 1995, 180-191; Beirante 2011, 27-76).

Concerns about the souls of the deceased were particularly strong during Lent, as is reflected in the *encomendação das almas*. This 'entrustment of the souls' was a Portuguese custom that typically started on the Eve of Ash Wednesday, with penitents organizing nightly processions that increased in intensity during Holy Week and culminated on Holy Saturday. Participants walked for several miles behind someone carrying a large cross, and said prayers to the saints, which were occasionally interrupted by calls for prayers for souls in purgatory. According to popular belief, these nightly processions attracted tormented souls, most notably at crossroads and cemeteries, which made them a dangerous endeavor and required a complex set of rituals to ensure protection (Braga 1885, vol. I, 173-174 and vol. II, 196; Chaves 1945, 176-188; Dias and Dias 1953, 5-71). Holy Week celebrations in Portugal during the early modern age were also characterized by torch parades on the Eve of Maundy Thursday, in the context of which people masked as penitents or as Roman soldiers, and, as Rodney Gallop phrased it, 'exercised the traditional privilege of shouting aloud the secret sins of the inhabitants. No calumny was too vile or scurrilous, no charge too false or too true, to be proclaimed in this manner to all and sundry' (1936, 107). People typically also reenacted scenes from the Passion of Christ that culminated on Holy Saturday with the *Queima de Judas*, the burning of an effigy symbolizing Judas (Chaves 1932, 54; Oliveira 1984, 75-76).

As Francisco Bethencourt has demonstrated, the formation of confraternities was one of the principal processes of transferring such late-medieval Portuguese customs to other parts of the world (1998, vol. I, 385-386). As early as 1495, the Cape Verdean island of Santiago had a church for the Black confraternity, dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary. The same occurred in 1526 in São Tomé. Since these mutual aid and burial societies played a key role in the conversion of newly arrived Africans and the dissemination of Portuguese customs, those in leading positions acquired great prestige within the Black community (Farinha 1942, vol. I, 91; Costa 2014, 199). In São Tomé, the Crown went as far as to authorize the 'king' of the confraternity of Our Lady of the Rosary to purchase the freedom of any enslaved person who had proven to be a loyal member, even if this was against the will of the owner (Brásio 1952-1988, vol. I, 472-474).

Equally important is that, in the context of confraternities, the Black elites reinterpreted Portuguese identity markers and customs from an African perspective, which induced a process of creolization. This can be illustrated with reference to language in São Tomé, where confraternities – locally known as *lumandadgis* – played a key role in the dissemination of the Portuguese language. Since the (free) Luso-Africans in charge of these confraternities used Portuguese to distinguish themselves from enslaved Africans who still spoke indigenous languages, they referred to their language as *forro*, the 'language of the free'. Indicative, however, of the Africanization that had occurred in the context of these brotherhoods is that *forro* was not Standard Portuguese but a Portuguese-based creole language with clear African features. This Africanization should caution us not to reduce brotherhoods to mere instruments of colonialism.

In fact, brotherhoods not only thrived in a colonial context but also among autonomously operating Luso-African communities. Among the Kristons in Upper Guinea, for instance, confraternities – known as *manjuandadis* – were highly prestigious organizations, known for their celebration of Catholic holidays in accordance with a Portuguese model, yet with African music and dance (Barreto 1938, 155; Brooks 2003, 216; Havik 2004, 133-134).

Parallels can also be drawn with the region of Kongo, where the *manikongo* (king) Mvemba a Nzinga, who had adopted the Portuguese name Afonso after his baptism in 1491, established a large-scale educational program. This allowed him to gradually replace Portuguese teachers with Kongolese ones and to send his own *mestres* to teach in the different provinces of his kingdom (Góis 1954, vol. I, 180-181; Brásio 1952-1988, vol. I, 294-323, 335-338, 361-363, 373-375). This policy was continued by later rulers, so that, upon his arrival in the Kongolese province of Soyo in 1608, the Dutch merchant Pieter van den Broecke identified 'twee of drie scholen, daer de kinderen (als in Portugael) van Papen onderwezen werden' (Van den Broecke 1634, 14).²¹ The number of *mestres* in Kongo must have been numerous. In 1760 the Capuchin Rosario dal Parco estimated that there were about six thousand Kongolese nobles and that almost all of them had several *mestres* (dal Parco 1963, 371).

Successive Kongolese kings also fostered the establishment of confraternities. Membership was initially the privilege of the kingdom's elite and therefore conferred great prestige. Those admitted to a confraternity enjoyed royal protection and could in theory not be sold into slavery (Cuvelier and Jadin 1954, 187; Thornton 1984; Fromont 2014, 202-216). A 1595 letter from the Kongolese ambassador in Lisbon reveals that by the late sixteenth century, no fewer than six confraternities existed in the nation's capital Mbanza Kongo, also known as São Salvador: those of Our Lady of the Rosary, the Holy Sacrament, Saint Mary, the Immaculate Conception, the Holy Spirit, and Saint Anthony, whose members gathered daily to celebrate Masses for the souls of the dead (Brásio 1952-1988, vol. III, 500-504).

²¹ (two or three schools, where the children (as in Portugal) are taught by Popes).

This concern with the souls of the deceased in Kongo is also reflected in the fact that, as early as in 1548, we find a reference to an *encomendação das almas* (Polanco 1894-1898, vol. I, 335). Sources also indicate that it was a customary practice in Kongo to pay *mestres* alms with the request to hold services for the souls of the deceased (Bontinck 1970, 52; Guattini and Carli 2006, 237). Similar traditions thrived in the context of confraternities on the African Atlantic islands. Since they mixed late-medieval Portuguese with indigenous African elements, these customs frequently clashed with the post-Tridentine European understanding of Catholicism that later missionaries brought to the islands (Farinha 1942, vol. I, 151; Matos 1963, 148). Nevertheless, many of these traditions persisted, in particular during Lent. As late as the mid twentieth century, Fernando Reis was still able to observe how local brotherhoods on São Tomé would gather at night during Holy Week, ‘rezando e cantando em latim, acompanhados em coro’ (1969, 20)²² and marching as a ‘ruidoso grupo de dançarinos, vestidos dum modo extravagante, alguns com trajes de mulher, coloridos, com enormes chapéus’ (21).²³ They sang ‘cantigas improvisadas, repletas de subentendidos maliciosos, de remoqueos brejeiros’ (*ibid.*).²⁴ According to Reis, these parades related to the crucifixion narrative in the sense that the singing and dancing symbolized ‘a alegria dos inimigos de Jesus Cristo pela Sua morte’ (*ibid.*).²⁵ Other parallels can be found in the *Stlevas*, as derived from the Portuguese *Trevas* (Latin *Tenebrae*), when, on the Eve of Maundy Thursday, groups parade while singing songs to publicly shame ‘sinners’ (Morales 1901, 29-30). In addition, people in São Tomé used to carry around *mamiangus Zuda* (straw effigies of Judas) on Good Friday that were insulted and later violently destroyed by a crowd shouting: ‘bamu dumú Zuda’ (Pereira 2002, 285-286).²⁶

5. Chivalric Elements

The Portuguese caravels that originally brought these customs to Africa featured the emblem of the Military Order of Christ on their sails. This symbol illustrates the Portuguese perception of its overseas expansion as a continuation of the *reconquista*, marked by the ambition to find new resources and allies in an ongoing struggle against Islamic forces. The ‘reconquest’ also had an important impact on the way Carolingian mythology evolved in the Iberian Peninsula, most notably in the context of the twelfth-century Turpin Chronicle and the connection it had established between Charlemagne, Saint James the Greater/the Apostle, the latter’s shrine in Santiago de Compostela, and the fight against the Moorish enemy. Equally important was the interpretation of Roland as a Christ-like figure, whose death in Roncesvalles was understood as a necessary sacrifice for the successful ‘liberation’ of the peninsula and the subsequent expansion of this ‘new crusade’ to other continents (Correia 1994, vol. I, 116-123).

A reflection of this can be found in the foundation story of the new Kongolese regime after Afonso had, with Portuguese support, defeated his half-brother in the battle of Mbanza Kongo in 1506. Inspired by his Portuguese counsellors, the new ruler related his victory to a miraculous intervention by Saint James the Greater. In the account he sent to Portugal describing the battle, Afonso explained that Saint James, wearing a scarlet cape and riding a white horse,

²² (praying and singing in Latin, accompanied by a choir).

²³ (boisterous group of dancers, dressed in extravagant ways, some wearing women’s clothes, colorful, with enormous hats).

²⁴ (improvised songs, full of malicious allusions and lascivious jeers).

²⁵ (the joy of Jesus Christ’s enemies over His death).

²⁶ (we will destroy Judas).

had appeared in the sky leading an army of knights under a white Constantine cross. Afonso's vision paralleled the purported intervention of Saint James in the mythical battle of Clavijo in 844 that supposedly resulted in a crucial victory over the Moors in the struggle for control over the Iberian Peninsula. One may even suspect that missionaries had established a connection to Saint James on the day of his baptism. By baptizing him with the name Afonso, they connected this Kongolese prince to Afonso Henriques, Portugal's first king, who defeated the Moors in the battle of Ourique in 1139 thanks to an alleged intervention by Saint James (Góis 1954, vol. III, 149-153; Brásio 1952-1988, vol. I, 141-147, 256-259, 266-269; Pigafetta 1969, 70-89).

Following Afonso's victory, Saint James came to be adopted as the patron saint of Kongo. His symbol, the sea scallop, and the swords of his angelic knights featured on the kingdom's coat of arms, and his feast on July 25 became the kingdom's official holiday. These deliberate parallels to the crusades and the *reconquista* were further strengthened by the introduction of chivalric symbols in the African kingdom, including the use of noble titles (count, duke, etc.), coats of arms, thrones, crowns, and swords. The latter played a key role in the Kongo king's knighting of loyal supporters in the Order of Christ, a practice that continued in the Kongo region for several centuries (Brásio 1952-1988, vol. I, 247-253, 256-259, 521-539, vol V, 280-293, 310-315, vol. VI, 230-233, 375-384; Thornton 2007; Fromont 2014, 47-59, 71, 130).

Some of the characteristics of the confraternities were also influenced by Iberian chivalric culture. Significantly, members were often given noble titles (king, duke, marquis, etc.), used swords for specific rituals, and frequently staged semi-military parades with sword fights and other mock-war performances (Chaves 1945, 41-42, 136-138; Oliveira Marques 1971, 224; Oliveira 1984, 149-150; Beirante 1990, 15-16, 43).

6. *Kongo Dances*

Kongo, too, had a tradition of mock-war performances. The latter were known in Portuguese sources as *sangamentos*, as derived from the Kikongo verb *ku-sanga* that evokes the spectacular leaps, contortions, and gyrations of the performers. These movements were related to a war technique which, in 1594, the Portuguese Jesuit Pêro Rodrigues called *sanguar* and described as 'dar saltos de huma parte pera outra com mil tregeitos, e tanta ligeireza que possam escapar da frecha e pilouro' (Brásio 1952-1988, vol. IV, 563).²⁷ To the sound of drums, marimbas, and ivory horns, armed men would show their agility in an imaginary war scene.

Sangamentos were particularly important at the coronation of a new king, when the latter's victories in past battles were reenacted, as well as on Saint James' Day, when nobles from all the provinces were expected to come to the capital to pay tribute and taxes to the king. Over time, European musical instruments, weapons, and regalia were added to this war dance. The Capuchin Giovanni Francesco da Roma observed in the mid-seventeenth century that the Kongolese played several musical instruments during *sangamentos*, including 'tamburi del paese, & anco di quei d'Europa' (Romano 1648, 201).²⁸ His counterpart Andrea da Pavia observed that when questioned about the origin of the *sangamento* at the feast of Saint James, locals told him that the Portuguese had taught and advocated the celebration of this saint in Kongo (da Pavia 1970, 451-452).

In the Iberian Peninsula, Saint James was the patron saint of the soldiers under the name *Santiago Matamoros/São Tiago Matamouros* (Saint James the Moor-Slayer). As such, he

²⁷ (to leap from one side to another with a thousand twists and such agility that they can dodge arrows and spears).

²⁸ (indigenous drums and European drums).

was typically celebrated with a mock war performance known as *Moros y Cristianos/Mouros e Cristãos* (Moors and Christians). In this mock war play, Moorish forces initially seem to obtain victory but are eventually defeated and forced to bow down in order to be baptized as Christians. This mock war performance also gave rise to a dance that employed contredanse figures as well as line and circle configurations depicting a battle. For this, the dancers used swords or sticks, while occasionally adding clownesque or devilish characters (Chaves 1942, 15; Ruiz 2012, 38-39, 110, 197-209, 212-218, 255-256; Massip 2019, 36-41; Cáceres Valderrama 2021, 20-22).

The influence of this Iberian tradition is noticeable in Girolamo Merolla da Sorrento's late-seventeenth-century description of a *sangamento* in the Kongolese province of Soyo, where the prince performed two acts of war; a first one 'all'vso del paese, portando su'l capo vn fascio di vaghissime piume, composte a guisa di corona, adopra arco, e saette',²⁹ and a second one in which he wore a 'croce d'oro [e] vn cappottino di scarlato, tutto trenato d'oro, aperto da ambi i lati'³⁰, which permitted 'seruesi dell'archibugio'³¹ (Merolla da Sorrento and Piccardo 1692, 157). Both the cross and the red cape can be understood as allusions to Saint James and recall the foundation story of the kingdom.

Another example of how Kongolese and Iberian traditions merged in public performances is the anonymous description of the 1620 celebrations in Luanda, the Portuguese settlement at the southern border to Kongo, following the canonization of the Jesuit Francis Xavier. These included a procession featuring 'três gigantes'³² and the 'as confrarias desta cidade',³³ dances by 'crioulos de samtome ... com elles hia o seu rej',³⁴ a 'dansa de espadas tam boa como as milhores de Portugal',³⁵ 'outro theatro, no qual tambem se hia receber o sancto o reino do Congo',³⁶ and the performance of the 'passo de vida do B. P^e fran^{co} de xavier, quando estando pregando em Malaca prophetizou a vitoria que os portuguezes alcançarão dos Achens. Foy obra de grande aparato de guerra' (Felner 1933, 531-543).³⁷

Since a large percentage of the Africans to be taken to the Portuguese-controlled Atlantic islands originated from the Kongo region, it may not be a coincidence that we find references in São Tomé and Príncipe to a *dança congo* (Kongo dance) that is characterized by a frenetic, almost violent form of dancing, with frequent jumps and spinning maneuvers that recall *sangamentos*. The earliest extensive description of such a Kongo dance can be found in the context of a nineteenth-century play in honor of Our Lady of Peñafrancia, with dialogues in Forro narrating how Captain Kongo and his soldiers, with the help of angels, defeated a dragon. In accordance with Iberian tradition, stilt walkers ask the audience for donations during the play, while cross-dressed buffoons keep people animated with their antics. Participation at Kongo dances used to be considered a form of ex-voto to a saint, locally known as *paga devê* (to pay back what you owe) in the Catholic tradition of expressing gratitude for the fulfillment of a vow (Negreiros 1895, 167, 173; Ambrósio 1992).

²⁹ (according to the style of the country [with] an arch and arrows [and wearing] on top of his head a sheaf of very wide feathers).

³⁰ (cross of gold [and] a small scarlet overcoat, embroidered with gold thread, open from both sides).

³¹ (the use of the arquebus).

³² (three giants).

³³ (confraternities of the city).

³⁴ (creoles from São Tomé ... in the company of their king).

³⁵ (swordfight that was as well performed as the best one can see in Portugal).

³⁶ (another theatre play whereby the King of Kongo welcomed the saint).

³⁷ (scene from the life of St. Francisco Xavier about the time when he was preaching in Malacca and prophesized that the Portuguese would obtain a victory against those from Aceh, which involved a great spectacle of war).

As Françoise Gründ has demonstrated, the Carolingian plays that developed in São Tomé and Príncipe were strongly influenced by these Kongo dances (2006, 48). A similar connection to Carolingian drama was made by Gerhard Seibert, who pointed out that the Kongo dances in São Tomé recall ‘performances dedicated to the King of Congo in Brazil, Colombia, and Panama. Such performances, called *congós* or *congadas*, constitute an integral part of the festivals of religious brotherhoods’ (Seibert 2004, 685).

As Judith Bettelheim confirms, Panamanian *congadas* adhere to ‘a form of Christianity, particular to areas of West-Central Africa [that] arrived in the Americas along with the slave trade’ (2004, 288). During Lent, they stage a performance that concludes with a fierce battle between the soldiers of *Capitán Congo*, assisted by angels, and pagan enemies dressed like devils. Once they are defeated, the latter choose a godparent and are baptized by a *padre Congo* (Lipski 1989, 67-114; Smith 1994). It is in the context of these *congada* fraternities that Brazilians of African descent continue, to this day, to perform Carolingian dramas and passionately reenact the battles of Olivier, Roland, and other paladins against their Moorish enemies. They do so, however, with dancing moves that recall Kongoese *sangamentos* and dialogues that used to include Kimbundu and/or Kikongo terms (Dewulf 2021). This prompted Arthur Ramos to argue that the rituals of Moors and Christians, as performed by *congadas*, ‘nada mais eram do que sobrevivência da coroação de monarcas africanos’ (1954, 38).³⁸ In some Brazilian towns, the role of Charlemagne in these plays is even taken over by the (Catholic) King of Kongo himself, who, with the help of his paladins, wages war against a ‘Moorish’ king of Bamba or some other African pagan enemy (Macedo 2008; Fromont 2013).

Equally important is the religious dimension of these performances and its connection to brotherhood traditions. Alexandra Dumas’ comparative analysis of the Carolingian drama that is performed on the island of Príncipe with that of the Brazilian town of Prado led her to conclude that people do not just take part in these plays for fun or out of tradition but consider participation a duty since a vow was made. She also noted a connection with the souls of the deceased by pointing out that it is common practice for participants at the *Auto de Floripes* to visit the cemetery in the early morning, where they offer reverence to departed souls. This ritual involves the saying of Catholic prayers and the sprinkling of alcohol on the tombs. To ward off the potential hazards of interacting with the souls of the deceased, participants use a special ointment called *murta* and wear sunglasses for protection (Dumas 2011, 147-285, 290-326).

Such practices are indicative of the syncretic process whereby the African adoption and reinterpretation of cultural elements rooted in Carolingian literature was influenced by late-medieval Portuguese and indigenous African religious traditions. It is precisely this mixture of cultural and religious elements that allows us to make sense of the concluding scene of the Lohodann saga.

7. Celebrating Lent in Annobón

Confraternities are of particular importance to the population of Annobón. Not unlike the *manjuandadis* of Kriston communities in Upper Guinea, the island has a tradition whereby people of the same age group form their own confraternity, known as *dadyi*. Other Annobonese confraternities are explicitly religious in nature and have a patron saint and chapel. A third form of confraternity, that of the *beatas*, is reserved for the island’s widows (Zamora Lobo 1962, 34; Parente Augel 1998, 40; De Wulf 2014, vol. II, 67, 108, 163-169).

³⁸ (are clearly a survival of indigenous coronation [rituals] of African monarchs).

According to ancient confraternity tradition, these societies not only provide mutual aid to the living members but also to the deceased. That this was a matter of great importance to the Annobonese population is reflected in Father Barrena's observation that the worst possible insult on the island was: 'demonio ma alma vo' (Barrena 1965, 14).³⁹ It is also important to mention the role of *soñadoras* (dreamers), mostly widows, who in their dreams receive messages from the deceased (Zamora Lobocho 1962, 29; Ávila Laurel 2004; De Wulf 2014, vol. II, 114, 126, 195). The concern with spiritual afterlife in Annobón was such that, besides the *Fesa Tudo Santu* (All Saints) and *Frofesã Yifuntu* (All Souls) on November 1 and 2, also July 4, the Day of *Santa Zébèl Lãyã Palagatolia* (St. Isabel, Queen of Purgatory), and September 9, the Day of the *Santa Zalma* (Holy Souls), were reserved for paying tribute to the souls of the deceased. Moreover, following a person's death, eight days of rituals were required to ensure that the deceased's soul departed in peace and did not haunt the living. During these nightly vigils, brotherhoods would chant the required prayers and narrate stories and legends (Zamora Lobocho 1962, 43, 52-57; Barrena 1965, 27-37; Caldeira 2007, 105-108; Caldeira 2008, 11-12). In the capital Palé, the latter typically occurred in the same place where, during Lent, the saga of Lohodann is narrated (De Wulf 2014, vol. II, 200).

Of particular importance to the understanding of this saga is that there are numerous other traces in Annobonese culture of ancient Portuguese Lent traditions dealing with the souls of the deceased. According to the Claretian Tomas Pujadas, people in Annobón celebrated Holy Week intensely 'para sacar las almas del purgatorio'⁴⁰ and were eager 'para tener agua bendita contra los malos espíritus' (1968, 428).⁴¹ To this day, the sacristans organize nightly processions for the souls of the deceased during Lent, during which they beat an ax against a cross and are followed by members of yet another confraternity, known as the *Jandumat*. At these processions, its members dress like demons, chant obscene songs, and are blessed by a character representing Pontius Pilate (De Wulf 2014, vol. II, 147-151, 219-221).

Such references reveal how people in Annobón, not unlike in Príncipe and São Tomé, adopted certain pre-Tridentine Portuguese rituals of protection against evil spiritual forces and subsequently reinvented them from an African perspective. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the saga of Lohodann includes a battle scene in hell and that the beach where Lohodann subsequently ends up happens to be located next to the island's main cemetery. Equally important is the observation by one of Caldeira's informants that, during his youth, stories circulated about the Annobonese fighting 'nã môlu' (2010, 106).⁴² When interpreting Lohodann from this perspective, the final scene with its visit to hell, subsequent stabbing of all those who fail to identify as truthful Christians, and the hero's tragic death upon completing his mission can be identified as Annobonese reinterpretations of ancient Portuguese Lent rituals to protect one's community from evil. Considering the key role of confraternities in the reinterpretation of these traditions, it is only natural that the saga places heavy emphasis on the conversion of unbelievers and that, as part of the Holy Week solemnities, Lohodann's death in the company of his mother builds a parallel to Christ's crucifixion. In fact, the story ends with a dramatic allusion to the eternal battle between good and evil forces, which stands at the heart of all Carolingian literature.

Unlike in the original story, however, the hero's sacrifice does not occur on the battlefield of Roncesvalles but in the old church of Palé, the *gueza nganyi*. This raises questions about the identity of the 'false Christians' who are slaughtered by Lohodann. There are several possible

³⁹ (may demons take your soul).

⁴⁰ (in order to take the souls out of purgatory).

⁴¹ (to have Holy Water to protect against evil spirits).

⁴² (the Moors).

answers. One is that the scene reflects memories of the only recorded foreign invasion of the island, that of Dutch (Protestant) forces, and the armed resistance of the local population, which finds correspondence in Armando Zamora's observation that 'Esta leyenda es considerada por la mayoría de los annoboneses como una historia que tuvo lugar, o de verdad sucedió, en un momento de la historia del pueblo annobonés' (in Caldeira 2010, 114).⁴³ This theory suggests a parallel with Brazil, where in certain variants of *Moors and Christians* the King of Kongo does not fight (Islamic) Moorish forces, but (Protestant) Dutch soldiers (Barreto 1996, 169). It is, in this respect, also worth recalling that the seventeenth-century (Catholic) Kongolese elite fiercely resisted Dutch attempts to introduce Protestantism in the region, which culminated with King Garcia II publicly burning a pile of Calvinist books, in spite of his military alliance with the Dutch (De Rome 1964, 112).

Another possibility is that the scene reflects an internal debate about those on the island who identify as Catholic yet keep making use of *ofi* (witchcraft). That such suspicions could have deadly consequences can be illustrated with reference to eighteenth-century documents from Annobón referring to the killing of presumed witches by lapidation or, in later decades, by their forced expulsion from the island on a raft (Matos 1916, 88-90; Zamora Lobocho 1962, 61; Barrena 1965, 14; Caldeira 2007, 108-109; Caldeira 2008, 13-14; De Wulf 2014, vol. II, 188-211).

Caldeira offers yet another interpretation with reference to the Claretian efforts to purify the island's Catholicism, which made him characterize Lohodann as a 'campeón de la ortodoxia contra ... quien ... estuviera convencido de que la ... religión de los antepasados, era la verdaderamente cristiana (Caldeira 2010, 113).⁴⁴

However, when taking into consideration that the final scene alludes to the church that was destroyed by Claretian missionaries in 1887, one could also interpret the saga's conclusion as a call for resistance against the Eurocentric form of Christianity that these Spanish missionaries attempted to impose. In contrast to what one might expect when interpreting the saga from such a postcolonial perspective, this resistance did not come as a call for a return to a pre-colonial form of African indigeneity that rejects all European/Christian elements as signs of oppression. Rather, it came in the shape of a different form of Christianity, a syncretic one that built on the pre-Tridentine Catholic traditions the Portuguese once introduced in the region and that, in the context of local brotherhoods, went through a process of Africanization. From that perspective, Lohodann could be classified as a syncretic tale of anti-colonial resistance that, in itself, builds on two colonial legacies, one embedded in Portuguese religiosity, the other in Carolingian literature. The latter is all the more remarkable considering that the population of Annobón was illiterate. In fact, the strategic reinterpretation of European literature in the saga of Lohodann occurred entirely on the basis of memorization and thereby followed a pattern that corresponds to the way the Annobonese appropriated the Catholic prayers originally introduced by missionaries. As Governor Puente noted in 1895, they 'rezan las letanías a su modo'⁴⁵ and recite 'de memoria algunas oraciones mutiladas'⁴⁶ because 'entre ellos nadie sabe leer, ni aún el que se llama el maestro' (in De Wulf 1998, 42).⁴⁷

⁴³ (the majority of the Annobonese believe that this legend refers to something that really happened at a certain moment in the history of the Annobonese people).

⁴⁴ (a champion of orthodoxy ... against those who still believed that ... the religion of the ancestors was the real Christianity).

⁴⁵ (pray litanies in their own way).

⁴⁶ (from memory some mutilated prayers).

⁴⁷ (nobody among them can read, not even the one who calls himself master).

This complex form of ‘syncretic resistance’ finds a parallel in the island’s *muzúia*, a tradition that developed in the immediate aftermath of the destruction of the island’s main church in 1887. In the absence of an alternative, people in Annobón started to get married in the new church, built by the Claretians. Yet, once that ceremony is finished, they typically march in a festive parade organized by their *dadyi* (confraternity) to the sacred site where the old church used to be. There, the bride makes a genuflection in front of the same imaginary altar where Lohodann concluded his mission. In that position, she slowly turns her body from right to left and thereby makes the sign of a cross (Zamora Lobocho 1962, 48; De Wulf 2014, vol. II, 180).

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Contributors

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María Eugenia Albornoz Vásquez is a Historian and the Editor of the *Revista Historia y Justicia*. She works as a Lecturer at the Faculty of Law and the Department of History of the Universidad Alberto Hurtado, and at the School of History of the Universidad Andrés Bello (Chile). She is an Associate Researcher at the Center for Historical Studies of the Universidad Bernardo O'Higgins (Chile). She has published more than forty articles in academic journals and the following books: *Experiencias de Conflicto. Subjetividades, cuerpos y sentimientos en Chile, siglos XVIII y XIX* (2015) and *Sentimientos y justicia. Coordinadas emotivas en la factura de experiencias judiciales. Chile, 1650-1990* (2016).

Catalina Andrango-Walker is a Professor of Spanish at Virginia Tech. Her research is oriented towards the retrieval of the history and material culture of the colonial period in the Andean region by studying non-canonical texts by men and women who were agents of change in their societies. She is the author of *El Símbolo católico indiano (1598) de Jerónimo de Oré: saberes coloniales y los problemas de la evangelización en la región andina* (2018), and of *La construcción de la santidad en la región andina. La vida de la beata Juana de Jesús (1662-1703)* (2022), as well as of many articles and book chapters.

Aude Argouse holds a PhD in History and Civilizations from EHESS (École des hautes études en sciences sociales), and a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Law and a Master's Degree in Private International Law from Panthéon-Assas University. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Legal Sciences, Faculty of Law, University of Chile. Founding member of the journal *Revista Historia y Justicia*, she authored *'Je le dis pour mémoire': Testaments of Indians, sites of ordinary justice, Cajamarca, Peru, 17th century* (2016). Her research focuses on the history of justice and notarial practices, judicial practices of individuals considered illiterate in Hispanic America, and the circulation of legal knowledge. She is particularly interested in the material supports of public writing and the professionalization of the notary (16th-20th centuries).

Anna Clara Basilicò is a PhD candidate at the University of Padua and Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Her research focuses on the history of Inquisition prisons in Italy in early modern times (16th-19th centuries) and on prison graffiti as sources. In 2021,

she was awarded a two-years scholarship from the Max-Planck Kunsthistorisches Institut of Florence for the project GAP – Graffiti Art in Prison. In 2024 she was visiting fellow at the research centre ‘Cultures of Vigilance’ of the Ludwig-Maximilians University of Munich.

Anne Bérroujon is an *agrégée* History Teacher, a Lecturer in modern history at Grenoble Alpes University and a member of the Laboratoire de Recherche Historique Rhône Alpes (Larhra, UMR 5190). She has published around thirty contributions on the culture of writing in the modern period, with the aim of studying the production and appropriation of a large range of written documents in a context of more widely shared skills. In particular, she is the author of *Les écrits à Lyon au XVIIe siècle. Espaces, échanges, identités* (2009) and *Peuple et pauvres des villes dans la France moderne* (2014).

Fernando Bouza is Professor of Modern History at the Complutense University of Madrid, where he teaches about the written records of Iberian Powers from the Renaissance to the 19th century. Specialist in early modern Iberian politics and cultures (oral, visual, handwritten), he is the co-editor of *The Iberian World. 1450-1820* (2020); and author of *Portugal no tempo dos Filipes (1580-1668)* (2000), *Communication, Knowledge, and Memory in Early Modern Spain* (2004), *Hétérographies. Formes de l'écrit au Siècle d'Or espagnol* (2010), and *Palabra, imagen y mirada en la corte del Siglo de Oro. Historia cultural de las prácticas orales y visuales de la nobleza* (2020).

Antonio Castillo Gómez is Full Professor of Historiographic Sciences and Techniques at the University of Alcalá (Spain), where he coordinates the Grupo de Investigación LEA and the Seminario Interdisciplinar de Estudios sobre Cultura Escrita (SIECE). He is a specialist in the study of the social practices of writing and reading, with particular attention to the Modern Age. His most recent works include *Leer y oír leer. Ensayos sobre la lectura en los siglos de Oro* (2016), *El placer de los libros inútiles y otras lecturas en los Siglos de Oro* (2018), *Grafías no cotidiano: escrita e sociedade na história (séculos XVI-XX)* (2021). He is responsible for the curatorship of *L'eredità di Armando Petrucci. Tra paleografia e storia sociale* (2022). In 2020 he was awarded the University of Alcalá Prize for Research Excellence in Human and Social Sciences. He is currently principal investigator of the research project *Vox Populi. Spaces, Practices and Strategies of Visibility of Marginal Writing in the Early Modern and Modern Periods*, funded by the Spanish Government.

Jeroen Dewulf is Professor in Folklore and in Dutch Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. He is also associated with the University of Lisbon as a researcher at its Center of History. His research focuses on early modern Portuguese and Dutch colonial history, with an emphasis on the transatlantic slave trade and Black cultural and religious identity formation in the Americas. His most recent book publications include *From the Kingdom of Kongo to Congo Square: Kongo Dances and the Origins of the Mardi Gras Indians* (2017) and *Afro-Atlantic Catholics: America's First Black Christians* (2022).

Marco Francalanci obtained his PhD from the University of Milan and the University of Alcalá with a focus on book history in 2022. His thesis was awarded the Premio extraordinario de doctorado at the Universidad de Alcalá. He has authored several scientific publications and has conducted research on political communication in the Renaissance as well as on popular autobiography. Currently, he is working at the University of Alcalá as a 'Margarita Salas' postdoctoral researcher, studying popular literature in the modern age.

Jesús Gascón Pérez currently works in the Department of History at the University of Zaragoza, where he teaches Early Modern History and conducts research into the Social and Cultural History of Political Conflicts. He is the author of *La rebelión de las palabras* (2003) and *Alzar banderas contra su rey. La rebelión aragonesa de 1591 contra Felipe II* (2010). His most recent publication is 'La nobleza aragonesa en la Edad Moderna: entre la fidelidad al reino y el servicio a la monarquía', which is part of the collective book *Las noblezas de la monarquía de España* (2024).

José Luis Loriente Torres earned his Ph.D. from the Autonomous University of Madrid in 2023. His thesis is due to be published shortly in book form. His research focuses on autobiographical statements within inquisitorial contexts, examining the interactions between declarant, inquisitor, and scribe, and their roles in shaping the final document. He has a keen interest in social and cultural history, and has published several peer-reviewed articles and book chapters in esteemed international journals and with well-known publishers. Additionally, he reads papers at conferences, contributing to the academic discourse on historical documentation, subaltern groups, and inquisitorial procedures.

Miguel Martínez (PhD The Graduate Center, CUNY) is Professor of Spanish at the University of Chicago. He is the author of *Front Lines. Soldiers' Writing in the Early Modern Hispanic World* (2016; trans. *Las líneas del frente*, 2024), *Comuneros. El rayo y la semilla (1520-1521)* (2021) and of a critical edition of *Catalina/Antonio de Erauso's Vida y sucesos de la Monja Alférez* (2021). He is currently finishing a book project on the literary culture of the early colonial Philippines, provisionally titled *The Sunken City. Literature and Urban Culture in Colonial Manila*.

Juan Pedro Navarro Martínez is a 'Juan de la Cierva' postdoctoral researcher (GEHMO/ADHUC) at the University of Barcelona. He obtained his PhD in Social History from the University of Murcia (Extraordinary Award 2023). Previously he was a research fellow at the Royal Academy of Spain in Rome (State Agency for International Cooperation and Development) and training teacher at the University of Murcia, an institution to which he continues to be linked through the research project 'Generaciones Inciertas' (Uncertain Generations). His scientific work has been published in national and international journals. His most recent book, *Destruyendo Sodoma* (2024), is the first monograph on sexual crimes between men based on civil courts records. His current lines of research are the repression of the crime of sodomy in Spain and Italy in the early modern age, the construction of masculinity in the Mediterranean and forms of sexual violence.

Eduardo Santos Neumann holds a Bachelor and Master's Degree in History from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) and a PhD in Social History from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (2005). He is Full Professor at the Department of History and at the Graduate Program in History at UFRGS. He holds a CNPq productivity scholarship. His research topics include: History of Colonial America; Indigenous History; Social History of Written Culture. His main publications include: *Letra de índios: cultura escrita, comunicação e memória indígena das Reduções do Paraguai* (2015); with A.F. Barcelos, *A Razão Gráfica Missioneira: escrita e cartografia indígena nas Reduções da América Colonial* (2022); with F. Kuhn, Fábio (eds), *História do Extremo Sul: a formação da fronteira meridional da América* (2022).

Mariana Valeria Parma holds a PhD in History and a Postdoc in Human and Social Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires (Argentina). She has participated in several research projects of national institutions on medieval and modern Europe, particularly on the themes of conflict, armed mobilisation and the politicisation of the subalterns. She has participated in collective works published by the Foundation for the History of Spain and the University of Valencia and has written several academic articles in international and national journals. In 2023, the University of Valencia published her book *Guerras Plebeyas. Luchas políticas en la Germania, 1519-1522*.

Teresa Peláez Domínguez graduated in History at the University of València, where she specialized in the history of the early modern Western Mediterranean. She is currently a PhD candidate at the same institution. Her research interests focus on slavery and forced labor in Mediterranean societies during the early modern period. She has studied the writings of Christian slaves in Islamic societies who returned to Christianity in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Her current PhD research focuses on Muslim slaves in the Mediterranean galleys of the Hispanic Monarchy during the 16th Century.

Juan Manuel Ramírez Velázquez is an Assistant Professor of Spanish and Colonial Latin American Literatures at Colgate University. He completed his Ph.D. in Hispanic Studies and a Graduate Certificate in Latin American Studies at Washington University in St. Louis. He is currently working on his first monograph focusing on the intersections of gender, race, and mobility in early modern and colonial Latin American legal documents from the perspectives of literary performance and affect theory. His scholarly work has been published in the *Bulletin of Spanish Studies and Hispanic Review*, and in various edited volumes.

Lisl Schoepflin received her doctoral degree in Latin American History from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). She received her B.A. in Theater and Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and her M.A. in History at UCLA. She is a postdoctoral fellow at the Instituto de Investigación de Estética at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. She was awarded the Fulbright-Hays DDRA and the Getty pre-doctoral residency fellowships and UCLA's 2023 Thomas E. Lifka Dissertation Prize. Her scholarly interests include indigenous and colonial ethnohistory and social memory practices in the Andes, and the Americas more broadly.

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