Introduction

Outlines of the Mediterranean

‘The Mediterranean speaks with many voices; it is a sum of individual histories’, writes Fernand Braudel in his magnum opus on the Mediterranean world of the later sixteenth century (1: 13), a work that generously allows us to hear many voices. My strategy in this book consists in part of being attentive to writing and speaking in the early modern Mediterranean world, to how people characterised the modalities of relationships and communicability of that world across ethnic, religious, geographical, linguistic and racial boundaries. The texts themselves, in a wide array of discursive genres in many languages, embody writers’ and narrators’ voices, but also convey other voices, all of which in one way or another characterise their world and bring us into it almost as witnesses, depending on our ability to read and listen.

‘Early modern’ in this context begins perhaps with the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, but mainly a half-century later with the Spanish and Portuguese conquest of enclaves on the African coast and the inception of Maghribian corsairing on the part of Aruch and Hayreddin Barbarossa, as of their arrival from Lesbos in the east. Until when? I’ve willingly been pulled far afield by fascinating texts of the late seventeenth century, and even the early eighteenth. Although European hegemony took hold towards the end of the eighteenth century, indeed with important precedents, the Mediterranean of corsairs, captives and slaves had prevailed almost three centuries on both sides of the religious and geopolitical divide. This was also in most respects a ‘precolonial’ epoch, one in which the Spanish and Ottoman Empires faced off until they signed a truce in the early 1580s. After this there were likewise no ‘colonies’ as such, no dominant powers in the Mediterranean, although the Ottomans continued to hold much of the eastern Mediterranean and have regencies in the western basin as well.

More problematic is the term ‘Mediterranean’ here. Having lived a year in Egypt and visited the Mashriq, I would have been delighted to have incorporated these lands into this study. Yet they are quite marginal because the texts I deal with rarely take us to those parts of the eastern Mediterranean, though they focus a great deal on Istanbul and other places in the east such as Cyprus and many other islands as well as the Adriatic coastline and, of course,
Venice. This is to say that ‘Mediterranean’ here is not a geographical concept nor a historical one but rather refers to where the texts ‘take’ us, and this depends on what kinds of texts we’re dealing with, as I’ll explain further ahead. It’s not my task here to define what the Mediterranean is because admittedly I won’t be dealing with the whole Mediterranean: long stretches of coastline everywhere will be only vaguely invoked if not entirely left alone along with
the many peoples who lived there. The same goes for whole regions, e.g. the Levant, which are by no means excluded here, but simply ‘less present’ owing to the internal itineraries of texts I’ll be considering.

Nonetheless, the debates among historians about how to conceptualise the Mediterranean are significant here, and in turn I have my own takes on these questions, particularly as they pertain to the parameters of this study:

- What are the external boundaries of the Mediterranean, and what determines them? Does the Mediterranean include only the sea itself, or the shores contiguous with it including port cities, or all the lands surrounding it?
- Is the Mediterranean a unity, a duality or a multiplicity? Otherwise put, are there one, two, three or more Mediterraneans, and by what criteria can they be distinguished as different or, on the contrary, subsumed into a common nexus?
- What internal boundaries or frontiers of the Mediterranean can be identified, and what kinds of boundaries or frontiers are they?
- How do historical epochs, including the rise and fall of ‘civilisations’ and empires, affect the questions raised above?
- What aspects of the Mediterranean may be considered unique, and what aspects does it share with other regions?

Perhaps Fernand Braudel develops the broadest conception of the Mediterranean by defining the sea itself and shorelines as the core but also demarcating a ‘greater Mediterranean’ bordered by the Alps, the Atlantic, the desert, certain river valleys, the outer edge of the cultivation of olive trees and date palms, and so on. This enables him to take a large view and observe how peoples and regions quite distant from any of the seas of the Mediterranean connect to them by way of commerce, travel, political and military intervention. Thus, for example, considering the strong presence in the Mediterranean of Madrid, despite its distance from the sea, and of Lisbon, despite its location on the Atlantic, and of other influential places not on the shores of the mare nostrum, the Mediterranean can be understood within its larger context of interchange and intervention. Braudel’s ‘greater Mediterranean’ by no means prevents him from offering a great deal of information and insight about the sea itself.¹

In his impressive long-range history of The Great Sea, David Abulafia opts rather for writing ‘a history of the people who crossed the sea and lived

¹ Braudel’s concept of the greater Mediterranean has led some historians to criticise him for writing about the lands around the sea and for not being ‘a maritime historian.’ The accusation is unfair, for although he often does turn his attention far inland, he also devotes much attention to the sea itself, its shores, islands, ports, and all the human activities that take place there.
close by its shores in ports and on islands’ (xvii). There are several valid ways to define the perimeter of the Mediterranean, each of which presupposes a different methodology. For my purposes there’s no need as such to define the outer boundaries of the Mediterranean, particularly since what I’m most interested in are frontier contact zones. In any event, I don’t exclude a priori the ‘greater Mediterranean’, not only for political or commercial reasons but also because many people from the hinterlands, among them the young Miguel de Cervantes who abandoned Madrid for Italy, became as Mediterranean as anyone else.

More knotty is the issue of the unity or division or plurality of the Mediterranean during the early modern epoch. Already for a millennium, Muslims and Christians had confronted each other and sometimes coexisted in different parts of the Mediterranean. The Belgian historian Henri Pirenne, in works published between the two world wars, claimed that the expansion of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries, rather than the earlier Germanic invasions, decisively ruptured Roman history, creating a permanent barrier between western Europe and the eastern Mediterranean in particular. While Pirenne framed and nuanced the Christian-Muslim divide in novel ways, many writers from the sixteenth century till our times have insisted on situating the Muslim-Christian divide at the crux of Mediterranean history, if not world history. A different variant of this dichotomy is Samuel Huntington’s ‘clash of civilisations’ thesis – already suggested by Bernard Lewis and echoed by a fair number of scholars today, even some who deal with Islamic Spain – which posits civilisational conflict emerging as the primary catalyst of future discord and ultimately pits Islam against non-Islamic civilisations, particularly the Christian West. I mention this because the Muslim-Christian dichotomy underlies several conceptions of the early modern Mediterranean, including Andrew Hess’s *The forgotten frontier* (1978), which argues for a ‘separation of the Mediterranean world into different, well-defined cultural spheres’, and more specifically, a ‘divergence in the internal patterns of Latin Christian and Turko-Muslim civilisations’ (3). The so-called ‘forgotten frontier’ was most traceable in the Strait of Gibraltar, the ‘Ibero-African border’ separating Europe from Africa along with their respective ‘civilisations’ during this period.

No one denies the importance of the Christian-Muslim divide in the Mediterranean, nor am I aware that any scholars had forgotten that border or what it meant, for the first time in history, nor was it ‘forgotten’ during the early modern period after its inception in 1492. The frequent hostilities between Christians and Muslims at this time in the Mediterranean are not a hypothesis but a fact that has to be taken fully into account. The question is what to make of it along with much related evidence, how to characterise it and find its nuances. For example, while many scholars still frame their studies with the assumption that Islam and Christianity were at war with each
other in the Mediterranean of this epoch, we’ll see in subsequent chapters that there never was such a war. Hess’s thesis is better articulated and, at the same time, provides insight into what was going on especially in Morocco at that time. It is also a vehement argument against Braudel’s theory of the unity of the Mediterranean at this time. In Braudel’s words:

Today in 1972, six years after the second French edition, I think I can say that two major truths have remained unchallenged. The first is the unity and coherence of the Mediterranean region. I retain the firm conviction that the Turkish Mediterranean lived and breathed with the same rhythms as the Christian, that the whole sea shared a common destiny, a heavy one indeed, with identical problems and general trends if not identical consequences. And the second is the greatness of the Mediterranean, which lasted well after the age of Columbus and Vasco da Gama, until the dawn of the seventeenth century or even later. (1: 14)

In another passage, Braudel elucidates further how this ‘unity’ comes about: “The Mediterranean has no unity but that created by the movements of men, the relationships they imply, and the routes they follow. Lucien Febvre wrote, “The Mediterranean is the sum of its routes, land routes and sea routes, routes along the rivers and routes along the coasts, an immense network of regular and casual connections, the life-giving bloodstream of the Mediterranean region”’ (1: 276). For Braudel, then, the continual movement, contact and resultant human relations are what create a unity that might not otherwise exist. Such contact and relations might indeed be hostile, and yet this too, for Braudel, brings people together and contributes to unity. He even characterises corsairing on both sides as ‘positive’, correlating in its rise and fall with ‘the economic health of the Mediterranean’ (2: 887). He reminds us that ‘two great Mediterranean civilisations, warring neighbours, were frequently drawn, by circumstances and chance encounters, into fraternisation’ – which he substantiates with a splendid example (2: 759) cited in the final chapter of this book.

What Hess ultimately denies in his characterisation of ‘two increasingly different civilizations’ (10) turning away from each other is this movement in all directions, this all-so-frequent crossing from one side to the other, this contact/conflict and interchange and sometimes mutual understanding and even friendship. Braudel’s frontier is ‘liquid’ and porous, while for Hess it is ‘a thin line’, a ‘rigidly delineated boundary [that] virtually eliminated the possibility of cultural experimentation’ (10). Hess downplays the vivacious commerce that took place in the entire Mediterranean through every phase of hostilities, the massive trafficking of people throughout the region and thus the continuous presence of tens of thousands of captives/slaves on both sides, the vast number of renegades particularly in the Maghrib, and
the displacement of the Morisco population primarily to all the lands of the Maghrib, both clandestinely before the expulsion of 1609–14 or coercively during it. He also ignores in large part the proliferation of documents, autobiographical accounts, historical and geographical treatises, not to mention fictional texts about the Maghrib during this time. A key part of Hess’s argument depends on his characterisation of sixteenth-century Spanish culture, especially written works, which he has mainly learned about from second-hand sources.

Nor does he have a grasp on the abundant texts about Algiers or Tunis, two vibrantly metropolitan and intercultural ‘corsair’ cities whose intensity of contact between ‘civilisations’ refutes his main thesis, as would any study of Istanbul. This isn’t to say that Braudel’s admirable masterpiece is immune to major objections, but simply that Hess and some of Braudel’s other detractors – particularly Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell – haven’t identified what they are (e.g. his theory of ‘civilisations’). In general, however, it seems to me that Braudel’s conceptualisation of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean world has in important ways withstood the test of time and countertheses (see Fusaro, ‘After Braudel’). What’s more, many early modern texts to which he had no access, or of which he was unaware, uncannily confirm his intuitions.

For Hess there is no unity because the two civilisations politically and culturally turn inward and close the border, as it were, reducing the possibility of associative relations. This is very questionable even with regard to the Moroccan kingdoms he focuses on most, which had large numbers of Morisco exiles in the ports and palaces and in several important cities and towns, as well as captives/slaves and renegades, together with Jewish merchants (both autochthonous and immigrants/migrants), and a presence of other foreigners. Nabil Matar observes in this regard:

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2 For Spanish literature, Hess relies mainly on Albert Mas’s work Les Turcs dans la littérature espagnole du Siècle d’Or (1967), as his endnotes indicate. The last two chapters of Hess’s book, ‘The forgotten frontier’ (ch. 9) and ‘The Mediterranean divided’ (ch. 10) are particularly rich in ungrounded affirmations about early modern Spanish culture. I should clarify that I focus on Hess because in recent years I’ve heard respectable French, Spanish and American historians invoke his vision admiringly as an apt representation of the early modern Mediterranean.

3 Perhaps under the ‘anxiety of influence’, Horden and Purcell do all they can to discredit Braudel and nullify his achievements, placing him as the last of ‘Four men in a boat’ (along with Mikhail Rostovzteff, Henri Pirenne and Shlomo Dov Goitein), who are hopelessly ‘romantic’, i.e. incapable of seeing the realities of the Mediterranean. Another persistent claim on their part is that Braudel’s work seems ‘to have marked an end rather than a beginning in Mediterranean studies’ (37, 43), apparently allowing them to mark a beginning rather than an end. And implicitly, of course, they, as opposed to Braudel, are doing a ‘human history’ of the Mediterranean, though the humans in their work covering three millennia are largely anonymous, voiceless, faceless, unknowable, and have little if anything to tell us about themselves and their world.
Image of Algiers from Braun and Hogenberg's Civitates orbis terrarum, 1575
There were so many captives in Meknes, Ismail’s capital, that the inner part of the city, al-Qunaytara, became their exclusive living quarters, with separate residences designated for the various nationalities – British, French, Portuguese, and Spanish – and for women, clergy, and the wealthy. Captivity brought about an intermixing of peoples, races, and religions that was rarely seen during this period of history. In cities such as Meknes and Marrakesh, Tunis and Algiers, captivity introduced a unique element of internationalism. The presence of peoples from outside the Mediterranean basin – Britons, Russians, Slavs, Poles, and Armenians – shows the diversity that prevailed among the captive population. (‘England and Mediterranean captivity’, 5–6)

For Braudel there is unity because the dominant chords of confrontation, dissonance and conflict presuppose associative contact, open lines of communication and continual large-scale crossings of the religious and geopolitical divide. His concept of unity here is close to that of Georg Simmel, for whom unity (Einheit) in its larger sense comprehends both harmonious and confrontational ‘dualistic’ relations, and in his view depends on conflict to bring people together and to resolve, in whatever ways, the ‘dissociating factors’ that gave rise to the conflict. In this generalised sense, regardless of the outcome, conflict is positive and associative. We’ve already seen how Braudel never loses sight of the primary antagonism within the Mediterranean but sees even this antagonism as conducive to a wide range of relations and interactions. Moreover, he sees that the two sides were responsive to each other. Following the Hispano-Ottoman truce of the early 1580s, for example, he observes that both Spain and the Ottoman Empire turned their backs on the Mediterranean to concentrate on other fronts: ‘This should remind us, if a reminder is needed, that the two great Mediterranean Empires beat with the same rhythm and that at least during the last twenty years of the century, the Mediterranean itself was no longer the focus of their ambitions and desires’ (2: 678). If the

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4 In his essay on conflict, Simmel elaborates: ‘This misunderstanding [regarding “unity”] probably derives from the twofold meaning of the concept of unity. We designate as “unity” the consensus and concord of interacting individuals, as against their discords, separations, and disharmonies. But we also call “unity” the total group-synthesis of persons, energies, and forms, that is, the ultimate wholeness of that group, a wholeness which covers both strictly-speaking unitary relations and dualistic relations. We thus account for the group phenomenon which we feel to be “unitary” in terms of functional components considered specifically unitary; and in so doing, we disregard the other, larger meaning of the term.’ And regarding conflict in particular: ‘Conflict itself resolves the tension between contrasts … This nature [of conflict] appears more clearly when it is realised that both forms of relation – the antithetical and the convergent – are fundamentally distinguished from the mere indifference of two or more individuals or groups. Whether it implies the rejection or the termination of sociation, indifference is purely negative. In contrast to such pure negativity, conflict contains something positive. Its positive and negative aspects, however, are integrated: they can be separated conceptually, but not empirically’ (13–16).
choice is between one world or two, I have gravitated towards the notion of one Mediterranean world, and am averse to referring to the ‘Muslim world’ and the ‘Christian world’: it’s all far too interconnected to speak of two worlds, despite the many differences and antagonisms.

It may well be that Braudel doesn’t sufficiently acknowledge the socio-cultural differences among the many peoples of the Mediterranean or appreciate the importance of local spheres of trade and culture. In their extensive work on the Mediterranean, Horden and Purcell provide much evidence in support of the local nature of what took place in the Mediterranean. Given the many differences of language, ethnicity and religious affiliation, among other factors, an argument could be made that there were many Mediterraneans, at the same time as one would have to recognise that the Mediterranean as a whole had long-range trade routes, many cultural and religious similarities and that it functioned as a ‘system’, as it were. Unity in diversity, but above all unity: ‘The Mediterranean is the sum of many seas, each with its own character, each feeding and being fed by the one “Great Sea”’ (Abulafia, The Mediterranean in history, 15).

In A shared world: Christians and Muslims in the early modern Mediterranean, Molly Greene proposes a third paradigm beyond those of Braudel and Hess: ‘the world of the eastern Mediterranean. This world, I argue, had a dynamic all of its own, one that is not adequately conveyed by a focus on the struggle – or absence of one – between Christianity and Islam. From the time of the Fourth Crusade in 1204 onward, the eastern Mediterranean was the point of intersection for not two, but three, enduring civilisations – namely, Latin Christianity, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Islam’ (4). She focuses on the case of Crete, which was ‘not only the last stop in the long contest between the Ottomans and the Venetians. It was also the site of the most enduring, and profound, interaction among Latins, Eastern Christians, and Muslims in the eastern Mediterranean’ (4). Crete is indeed a fascinating case, and all the more so with the evidence she presents. Without questioning the validity of this case study as such, and admiring the richness of the three-way model, I don’t see that Crete is paradigmatic of the eastern Mediterranean, or that the ‘world of the eastern Mediterranean’ can stand for the entire Mediterranean (as suggested in the subtitle of her book): neither synecdoche is convincing.

Most interesting for my purposes is whether the eastern and western basins of the Mediterranean can be considered distinct and separate, and indeed whether the eastern Mediterranean can synecdochically assume the characteristics of the whole Mediterranean. The eastern and western basins of the Mediterranean have indeed long been distinguished. Besides the geographical evidence for this, the eastern Mediterranean in the sixteenth century did become, as Greene asserts, ‘the Muslim lake’, in the sense that the Ottomans controlled nearly all of it after the conquest of the Mashriq, Rhodes, Cypress, etc., except for the coast of eastern Italy and Sicily and a
number of other islands including Malta. To describe this as a ‘lake’ – in the
wake of Greek nationalists who called the eastern Mediterranean ‘the Greek
lake’ – seems imprecise. There are good arguments to support the idea that the
eastern Mediterranean functioned rather autonomously: Ottoman control,
the presence of Orthodox Christianity in many places, the reduced presence
of Latin Christianity, the relative detachment of the Fertile Crescent from the
concerns of the Latin Christianity of the western Mediterranean, and so on.
Istanbul itself was a megalopolis unmatched in size, strategic situation and
metropolitanism in the rest of the Mediterranean world.

There are also reasons to question the two-basin model of the Mediterranean.
The strait of Sicily (across to the Tunisian coast) was ten times wider than
the Strait of Gibraltar, for example – 90 miles wide as opposed to 9 – and
was no real impediment to seafarers going from one basin to the other. This
traffic was indeed constant and substantial, as evinced in countless texts of the
period. For example, the soldier Cervantes was stationed in Naples, Messina,
and elsewhere in the Italian west, but the naval campaigns he participated in
for years took him either to the centre (Tunis) or the eastern Mediterranean.
The Spanish corsair Alonso de Contreras ventured mostly into the eastern
Mediterranean before returning to his base in the centre, Malta. The Ottomans
themselves connected regularly with their regencies in Algiers as of 1516 and
Tunis as of 1574, had fleets and corsairs patrol the islands and coastlines of
the west, and even sent token support to Spanish Muslims in the 1568–70
war of Granada. A fair number of Spanish Moriscos ended up in Istanbul,
as did a great many captives. Merchants also crossed back and forth con-
tinually. In sum, there is no end to evidence pointing to a large volume of
traffic back and forth, by sea as well as by land, and the passage of large-scale
fleets further reinforces this. The Maghrib itself stretched into the eastern
Mediterranean, and Italy – such as it was – straddled west and east. I don’t
recall any writers of the early modern period distinguishing between the
western and eastern Mediterranean. While I recognise significant differences
between west and east, I don’t see these as arguments for a ‘world of the eastern
Mediterranean’: once again, there was far too much traffic, contact and inter-
action between both sides to warrant the autonomisation of an eastern and
western Mediterranean.

That said, for nearly everyone who lived or travelled in the Mediterranean,
this sea made up of different seas would seldom be conceived as a totality but
instead as a relational set of places and routes that would alter according to
where one was from or had been and under what circumstances. It was mostly
a perception of ‘here’ and ‘there’ rather than of a cartographic image. For
different people, then, the notion of what we call ‘the Mediterranean’ would
have varied greatly according to how they were situated geographically and
in every other way. Most port cities would serve in part as nuclei of specific
land and sea routes connecting to other places and regions, likewise without
Seventeenth-century watercolour of the Algerian and Spanish shores of the Mediterranean
connecting as such to the entirety of the Mediterranean. Only a few ports (perhaps Istanbul, Algiers, Valetta, Venice, Naples) would have had the sense of connecting more or less to the whole Mediterranean, and only a minority of individuals such as heads of state, cartographers, admirals and ship captains would have had a quasi-visual awareness of the entire Mediterranean. There were of course many maps, including portulan maps, of the whole sea, enabling users to visualise it with all its contours. A mariner and corsair captain like Alonso de Contreras would have had such a totalising view, as he explored nearly all of it and, nearly twenty years since he was a young sailor, composed his pilot’s descriptive guide to the whole Mediterranean with all its coastlines and islands, the *Derrotero universal* (1616).

Key to my concerns are Mediterranean frontier zones, those places where there tended to be contact and interchange of whatever kind between people of diverse socio-cultural and religious signs. These frontier zones could be on either side of the religious and geopolitical divide, which certainly wasn’t a line that anyone then or now could draw in the water or on a map, but rather a sense that moving between Muslim-controlled and Christian-controlled lands and islands involved a kind of crossover that didn’t occur when moving between territories controlled by people of the same religion. On either side of this diffuse, watery divide, or even on it, were spaces irregularly distributed around the Mediterranean of denser or sparser contact zones, among many other areas where there was little if any contact. Contact here refers mainly to encounters between Christians, Muslims and Jews, including between representatives of subdivisions within these categories (e.g. within Christianity, Catholic and varieties of Orthodox and Protestant), as well as adversaries within the geopolitical layout of the Mediterranean. Differences of ethnicity, language, race, gender, sexuality, and so on, would also come into play according to particular circumstances, but not all of these lines of distinction would always qualify as creating contact zones. While all port cities fell clearly on one or the other side of the most salient geopolitical and religious divide, some of them provided unusually dense contact zones, among them Algiers, Tunis, Istanbul, Thessaloniki, Valletta (Malta), Venice, Naples, Palermo, Genoa, Marseille, Valencia – and, on the Atlantic side, Lisbon. This was also the case of other cities somewhat inland such as Marrakesh, Fez, Cairo, Rome and Seville, to name a few. All of this adumbrates in different shades the frontier zones within the expanse of Mediterranean seas and lands, in some cases overlapping with the Atlantic.

I use ‘frontier zone’ and ‘contact zone’ interchangeably. The latter term was conceptualised in 1991 by Mary Louise Pratt, who defines it as ‘social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today’ (34). While the first half of this definition could have some application to the early
modern Mediterranean, my interest is less in power struggles and negotiations than in the range of relations that develop throughout the contact. Power is certainly a factor, yet it tends to be already decided before these encounters take place. For instance, if someone is captured and enslaved, the power factor is established from the outset and is rarely up for negotiation. Moreover, my use of ‘zone’ refers less to abstract social space than to an actual place such as a port city or any other identifiable heterotopia where these sorts of contact occur. In every case it’s important to look into what kind of contact takes place, how the frontier zone itself acts on the relations between people and on their ways of behaving and thinking – because those who find themselves on the frontier do act and think differently from how they did or would elsewhere. They tend no longer to be who they were before; they act according to new parameters, think in ways that take into account how the ‘others’ think, and thereby develop a frontier consciousness. The chapters ahead will lead us to many ways in which this peculiar consciousness reveals itself.

Another critical aspect of Mediterranean frontier zones is that there tends to be a variety of ‘selves’ and of ‘others’. The ‘other’ is most often plural, not because there’s more than one person identified as ‘other’ but because the Mediterranean world as a whole offers many different kinds of ‘others’. The city of Algiers alone displays a whole inventory of types of ‘others’, as Sosa’s *Topografía de Argel* amply illustrates: any allusion to ‘the other’ as a singular concept, e.g. ‘the Muslim other’, is quite meaningless in that context. And within the *we/they* distinction, we tend to be miscellaneous as well.

Clearly, the kind of Mediterranean we find in texts of that period is historically bound. The Mediterranean I refer to is early modern, stretching from the mid- or late fifteenth century – the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and the conquest of the kingdom of Granada in 1492 signal two transformative events – until the eighteenth century, although the texts I deal with span mainly from the 1530s to the late seventeenth century, about a century and a half. There are of course many ways to periodise Mediterranean history. Taking a long view, Abulafia distinguishes five periods, the ‘Fourth Mediterranean’ extending from the Black Death in 1347 to the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, when the Mediterranean ‘had to cope with increasing competition from the Atlantic, and domination by Atlantic powers’ (*The Great Sea*, xvii). He subdivides this into nine sometimes overlapping periods under appropriate headings, but only a few of these bear any resemblance to the kinds of themes raised in texts examined here. The Mediterranean has undergone so many radical transformations over the centuries that, in my view, the Mediterranean of the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century, as well as that of the nineteenth century, are radically different Mediterraneans from the one considered here, and can hardly be lumped together. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, on the contrary, there were many
fundamental continuities, despite several highly significant shifts throughout this period.

If we turn our attention from the Mediterranean as object of study to the scholarship about it, we find several versions of the Mediterranean, some of them overlapping, contradictory, complementary or mutually exclusive. These versions spring from differences of academic discipline or approach, of epochs or regions of study within the Mediterranean, of national involvement in the Mediterranean, of languages in which the bibliographical sources are written, and so on. Networks of scholars have emerged, organising conferences and producing edited volumes, special journal issues, anthologies, introductory works by series of specialists, and the like, and these quite often ignore the research of scholars who work on different regions or issues, or from different bibliographical bases. To cite one example of exclusion or indifference, a number of top scholars from countries outside Spain have indeed been attracted to imperial Spain in the Mediterranean and especially to Sephardic or Muslim Spain through post-expulsion diasporas, and have been welcomed as fellow scholars and collaborators by an impressive group of Spanish scholars, many of them renowned Arabists and versed in other Mediterranean languages such as French, Italian or Turkish – yet this entire body of avant-garde scholarship tends to be ignored by most Anglo-American scholars of the Mediterranean. Barring these sorts of limitations, historians have in general taken the lead in Mediterranean studies while, for example, literary scholarship has most often lagged far behind. At the same time it should be noted that, with some remarkable exceptions, historians themselves have shown little interest in the ‘literary Mediterranean’ and less ability to understand its rhetoric and implications.

This book draws primarily on modern historiography and literary studies and explores a wide array of early modern writings including geographies, chronicles, descriptions of countries or cities, religious treatises, archival sources, autobiographical accounts, captives’ tales, and all the major genres of literary works. I’ve worked directly with texts in Spanish, French, English, Italian and Portuguese, and in translation with texts in Arabic (of which I have basic knowledge) and Turkish. Spanish writings are most prevalent, partly because of my own specialisation and partly because they are most likely the richest source of information and literary invention in the early modern Mediterranean unless unsuspected treasures someday turn up in Turkish archives. As a comparatist I’m by no means content with sources in one language and have drawn from writings in the other languages mentioned, particularly French, which I find extraordinarily interesting. Years ago I thought that perhaps a rudimentary corpus of early modern Mediterranean texts could be identified, but abandoned that idea after finding one remarkable text after another and wondering each time how I could have been unaware of it for so long, which of course implies that there’s still much I haven’t
found. Incompleteness is a necessary condition of this book, but I hope it’s compensated for by other qualities.

This range of texts will light up the Mediterranean in many places, particularly in frontier zones, while the variety of texts and frontier zones will multiply and even reverse the notions of self and other. The proliferation of pens – ‘la pluma es lengua del alma’ (‘the pen is the soul’s tongue’ [Don Quixote II, 16, 759]) – and voices bring people of that time closer to us: we hear them, or at least have the script of their words and can activate those voices in our imagination. This guarantees a ‘human’ character to what we’ll be examining. In reaction to Braudel’s emphasis in part I of The Mediterranean on slow, long-term natural changes affected by the natural environment, Horden and Purcell begin their massive work The corrupting sea by saying it is ‘the human history of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastlines over some three millennia’ (9). With some critique of The corrupting sea, Abulafia affirms that his own book, The Great Sea: A human history of the Mediterranean, ‘aims to bring to the fore the human experience of crossing the Mediterranean or of living in the port towns and islands that depended for their existence on the sea. The human hand has been more important in moulding the history of the Mediterranean than Braudel was ever prepared to admit. […] The roulette wheel spins and the outcome is unpredictable, but human hands spin the wheel’ (xxx–xxxvi). Admirable as this intention is, I question what ‘human’ means here. My impression is that it refers primarily to the often anonymous, faceless and voiceless activities of politics, war and economy, and so on. All of these are undoubtedly very ‘human’, but such ‘human history’ rarely brings us close to any humans, while that of Horden and Purcell distances us even further from human beings – unlike, say, Braudel’s history, which does indeed let the Mediterranean ‘speak with many voices’, all the more so as his work progresses beyond that environmental first part. My aim is to intensify even further the ‘human’ presence of the early modern Mediterranean by focusing primarily on a wide range of often remarkable texts written by people of that epoch who gave voice to their world. As far as I’m aware, many of these texts, passages, writers or characters have never appeared in a study in English – or, in a fair number of cases, in any language – and when they have been brought up, they tend to have been dealt with quite differently from the ways in which they appear in this book.

Why such methodological insistence on texts, voices, narratives? Well, it seems to me that trying to understand the Mediterranean of the early modern era without taking into consideration what the peoples of the Mediterranean wrote and said about themselves and others – how they described, narrated, dialogised and dramatised their life and their world – would be like trying to understand, say, ‘Shakespeare’, without having seen or read his works, relying instead on indirect documentation to conjecture what that author was allegedly about. By no means discarding other sorts of evidence, we can learn a great deal about these peoples through their writings.
Genres and writers

If the combination of many genres raises methodological problems, more problematic, it seems to me, would be restricting investigation to only one sub-category of sources, as often happens, or excluding, say, major genres such as narrative fiction, theatre and poetry, since this would impoverish immensely our image of any particular society and of the modalities of relations that arose between foreigners and local populations. There’s nothing new at all in reading a society of the past through its imaginative literature, and such literature often tells us infinitely more about that society than do texts of other discursive genres. Yet no matter how ‘good’ it is, imaginative literature alone can give extraordinarily distorted and unreliable representations of a historical period, as is also the case with so-called non-fiction. In fact, perhaps none of these types of writing is reliable when read naively. For me, all types of writing display the characteristics of genre, whether fictional or not, and I concur with Hayden White that historiography is saturated with rhetorical, literary and ideological tropes and that it must take advantage of these inescapable properties to be effective.

The fact that imaginative genres don’t claim to be true as such, and that many other genres such as chronicles, autobiographies, geographical or ethnographic descriptions do claim to represent truth, is of course fundamentally important. This obviously doesn’t mean that histories will be true, but simply that they claim to be true. As Mark Twain puts it, ‘The very ink with which all history is written is merely fluid prejudice’ (101). The various kinds of treatises (chronicles, descriptions, etc.) we’ll be looking at tend to have a high dose of fluid prejudice, and have to be read by assessing how such prejudice feeds into writing and obfuscates what it (mis)represents. Aristotle in his *Poetics* already distinguishes between poetic truth and historical truth – a distinction highly regarded in the early modern period – without taking into account the distorting or falsifying aspects of either one of them, as Nietzsche does when referring to what we could call poetic falsity: ‘The muses as liars. – “We are capable of telling many lies” – thus the muses once sang when they revealed themselves to Hesiod. – Many vital discoveries can be made if we for once apprehend the artist as a deceiver’ (*Human*, vol. 2, pt. 1, #188).

All genres are suspect with regard to their truth value, yet few if any can be discounted. In many inquisitional records, the inquisitors tirelessly tell the accused, over months and years if necessary and with the instruments of torture nearby, to tell the ‘truth’ until they hear what they want to hear, yet from these torturous interrogations we can glean certain kinds of knowledge about the real circumstances of the accused. Without the mulishly faithful recording of these trials we would know so much less than we do about the early modern Mediterranean. At the other extreme Cervantes, in his play *La gran sultana*, does indeed allow us to see flashes of truth by exaggerating
or inverting all the common stereotypes about the Ottoman court at Topkapı palace; to get at this truth we have to work through all the playful distortions and falsifications that the play presents us with (Alcalá Galán, ‘Erotics of the exotic’, 27–9). Yet we can’t assume that Cervantes, with all his genius and prestige, always feeds us some kind of truth: he too occasionally listens to the muses’ lies, it seems. On the other hand, in recent decades historians have been deeply impressed by how much rare insight can be gained from reading Cervantes’ stories about the early modern Mediterranean world. As we know, fiction can sometimes illuminate what non-fictional genres are incapable of expressing. At the same time, many of the stories of historically identifiable characters and events are ‘stranger than fiction’, and thus strikingly revealing, especially in the Mediterranean world. Antonio de Sosa, in his Topografía de Argel, provides an enormous amount of credible and highly valuable information about Algiers as long as we know how to gauge his phobias, blind spots and other limitations. These few examples show us that the best we can do is counterbalance the different genres, often reading against the grain. All of the genres, ‘fictional’ or ‘non-fictional’, steeped with more or less prejudice, provide us with the wherewithal not to construct a complete mosaic about anything but at least to contextualise different types of knowledge in relation to each other and thus get a sense of how the Mediterranean world worked. In every case we need to be cognizant of the parameters and procedures of the genre, and the writer’s handling of the genre as well as the expectations and limitations of whomever the text seems intended for.

Michel Foucault opens and closes his essay ‘What is an author?’ by quoting a passage from one of Samuel Beckett’s Texts for nothing: ‘“What does it matter who is speaking”, someone said, “what does it matter who is speaking”’ (979). The passage, uttered anonymously (not exactly by the author ‘Beckett’), speaks of an unnamed person who either doubts or denies the relevance of who is speaking, and we as readers are at least three removes from this anonymised who is speaking. The statement, or rhetorical question without a question mark, could readily be adapted, as Foucault does, to writing. And what does it matter that Beckett of all people is writing this, and that Foucault in particular is citing it in his own text, and that someone is reading my quotation of all this anonymity and named authority? Many of the voices invoked in early modern texts are anonymous or somehow generic, and many texts themselves could have been penned by other writers with similar characteristics. Thus there are various intensities of anonymity in the vast majority of written and spoken acts: anonymity is mutable because sometimes we know nothing at all about who is writing or speaking, and other times we know something such as what category of person (e.g. woman or man, old or young, slave or free, ruler, renegade, marabout, corsair, merchant, Turk, Arab, Jew, Christian, and so on), or what the person’s name is, conferring some partial individuality on the speaker or writer beyond Beckett’s ‘someone’. The sheer volume
of people’s acts including writing and speaking, whether anonymous, semi-
anonymous or fully identifiable, evidently creates patterns that lead attentive
listeners and readers to decipher aspects about the life of the early modern
Mediterranean’s named and unnamed protagonists. The relevance or irrele-
vance of who is speaking or writing also depends on what is being said or
written, to or for whom, in what circumstances, and so on. While acknow-
ledging the near anonymity of many utterances and the frequent inconse-
quentiality of who is speaking or writing in such cases, in other instances
we might also attach primary significance to the question of who is writing
or speaking, either because of the type of person this is (a diplomat, a sul-
tana, a viceroy, a ransomer of captives, a captive, etc.) or, still more important,
because of the individual characteristics of, say, a writer (Rabelais, Francisco
Núñez Muley, Montaigne, Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī, Cervantes, Antonio
de Sosa, Lope de Vega, Evliya Çelebi, María de Zayas, Emanuel d’Aranda,
etc.). No matter what ‘anybody’ says, none of these writers could be mistaken
for anyone else, and their ‘authority’ far transcends the mere ‘author function’.
In these and other cases of writing and speaking, we need to know who is
saying what to whom, how, why, and in what circumstances.

Equally compelling is the question of who doesn’t write or speak, or who
does so in inhibited ways. The vast majority of people in the early modern
Mediterranean were illiterate, and another large segment would have been
incapable of writing a coherent text in any language. Many would have known
more than one language, but from knowing a language to being able to write
in it, e.g. in Arabic, Turkish or Greek, would have been an impossible leap for
most. In any of its versions the Mediterranean lingua franca, remarkable as
it was as the only pan-Mediterranean language, was an unwieldy instrument
stripped of most grammatical inflection, made for oral communication but
unsuitable for writing other than basic communication, mockery or parody.
Among those who were able to write, then, many would have chosen not to
or would have found their writing constrained in certain ways.

In his invaluable study and anthology Europe through Arab eyes, Nabil
Matar makes some observations regarding what kinds of texts were written
by Muslims and particularly Magharibi (people of the Maghrib): ‘Unlike
the European corpus of captivity, the Arabic corpus produced no plays or
novels, nor grand narratives interspersed with page after page of empir-
ical (or imaginary) ethnography, fauna, or flora. The corpus captivitis of
the Magharibi is by far smaller than its European counterpart, consisting
of anecdotes, memories, letters, and miracle accounts/karamat, all of them
rarely more than a few paragraphs’ (70). Even the handling of these genres of
personal experience was very different, too: Christian writers tended to write
verbose accounts replete with descriptions of their humiliations and the
cruelties they had to endure. Similar genres likewise followed very different
conventions of style in Arabic: autobiographical writing and travel narratives
often suppressed details about one’s own life, quoted previous authors and inserted laudatory poems and expressions of gratitude (20, 39–41).

Despite there being a corpus captivitis on both sides, and despite the tempting imitatio Christi model available to Christian ex-captives, it is more than understandable why the vast majority of literate or semi-literate former captives/slaves did not write about this harrowing experience either during or after it. In most cases, captivity/slavery would have been profoundly degrading, with many variations of abjection. It also tended to be very repetitive, as we see in some attempts at writing about one’s own slavery. And it involved a loss of agency, since, as Sebastián de Covarrubias annotates in his great lexicon, ‘el esclavo no es suyo’ (‘the slave does not belong to himself’, under esclavo). None of this lends itself well to writing, let alone reading. The mould that most prevails is the capture-slavery-freedom sequence, which tends to work if the slavery part is livened up, e.g. with possibilities for escape. It takes a superior story-teller and observer to turn slavery from, say, a repetitive experience of drudgery and abuse into a series of adventures or anecdotes about other interesting people in the social milieu.

The issue of who wrote, and who didn’t, crosscuts with categories of gender, profession, religious affiliation, and so on. The scarcity of women writers in Mediterranean frontier zones is readily comprehensible for reasons both related and unrelated to slavery, as we’re all aware, including the perpetual striving on the part of women for rights of authorship. One would have thought that the life of travelling merchants (Jews, Muslims, Christians), with its highly privileged vantage points, might have been conducive to splendid narratives, but this was rarely the case. As for soldiers constantly on the move, those who did write, whether as ex-slaves or not, have given us some of the best accounts of the Mediterranean world, but again, nearly all refrained from writing. The most silent category of all despite their enormous importance was that of the ‘renegades’ in Muslim lands. This will be discussed more at length in chapter 3, but for now suffice it to say that writing would have meant confessing to apostasy, for a start, and would likely have included much else such as marrying a Muslim husband or wife, as well as having children, sometimes becoming a corsair, and so on. We know about renegades not because they wrote about themselves but mainly because the Inquisition documented the loss and recovery of their souls.

One category particularly predisposed to writing were clerics from the ransoming orders, mainly Trinitarians and Mercedarians, who had a cause that induced them to anathematise Muslim cruelty towards Christian captives and alert the people back home of the dangers of Christian captives reneging, which would imply sexual depravity, the spiritual loss of a Christian, and betrayal of country and religion as renegades became the worst enemies. Some of the most virulent texts of this kind come from Pierre Dan’s Histoire de Barbarie (1637) and Gabriel Gómez de Losada’s Escuela de trabajos (1670),
two monumental, meticulous and perversely intriguing works that spare no effort in pursuing their agenda. Here the what for? and for whom? frame the entire enterprise. Of course, all clerics were literate, and even those who didn’t share the same ransoming cause were inclined to defend the faith and take on Islam single-handedly, but some were also keen observers capable of dialogue and mutual understanding. I’m referring here mainly to two extraordinary writers who were also slaves, Antonio de Sosa in Algiers and Jerónimo Gracián in Tunis, whose works will be examined in some detail.

Apart from these, there were adventurers, ex-slaves who became geographers or historians, and an educated elite who wrote in Turkish, Arabic, Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and so on, including exiled Morisco writers in Tunis (Bernabé Pons, Los moriscos, 171–8; ‘De aljamía lejana’, 105–30). We’ll be looking into several of their works over the course of this book. Sometimes the intended readership and purpose of the texts are patent (e.g. bolstering the faith of fellow ex-Moriscos), while at other times the texts seem to be broadly intended for anyone who might be interested, without religious or ideological concerns. Cervantes deserves special mention for how he found innovative ways to turn his experience of slavery into narrative and drama, and, far beyond this, how his eleven years in the Mediterranean enabled him to vastly expand his perspectives on ‘the human’, to imagine his homeland from the other shore, and ultimately create the modern novel. His presence will be important throughout this book. For his part, Antonio de Sosa and his five-treatise Topografía de Argel will also receive attention because of the questions it raises about genre, the limitations and remarkable achievements of Sosa as writer, the wealth of information it provides, and the representation of Algiers, a city that looms large in the early modern Mediterranean and in many of the texts considered here.

I’d like to emphasise the processual nature of other people’s writing – especially far removed from us in time and place – an activity we can in some ways, no matter how remotely, engage with and reenact as we read the products of that writing, intuiting its moods, intentions and aims. If there’s nothing particularly ‘natural’ about writing, we need to be attentive to its wilfulness, its strategies and tactics, its affinities with established writing practices including genres. ‘Raw’ experience may not translate easily into writing unless ways have been devised to convey it via ink on a page, and there are probably many kinds of thought and experience (e.g. of those who lived in the early modern Mediterranean) that never found their way into any kind of writing. Obviously, what we’re left with is what we have, but besides viewing these texts as objects made or completed events, the methods I use advocate for striving to get glimpses into the writers’ ‘workshops’ in order to infer – to whatever extent possible and reasonable – how these texts were composed, and try to recover the act of writing. What might these writers have been thinking when they wrote this or that, and why did their texts turn out as they did?
This book, then, will unapologetically draw from fictional as well as non-fictional texts as flawed but vital sources for attempting to grasp how the conflicted Mediterranean world of corsairs, captives and converts was understood in the early modern era and how it can be understood now. Yet ‘fiction’ is by no means a self-evident category within this context because it is fiction configured by this context and by no means independent of it, and because – as is perhaps also the case with non-fiction – whatever insights it may yield rarely assume the guise of plain evidence. Where fiction diverges from non-fiction is in its relative detachment from supposed facts and in its greater autonomy to explore what’s imaginable and narratively interesting, to use stereotypes for a variety of purposes and occasionally to conceive of characters and plots that display paradigmatic qualities. But what kinds of invented stories are these, what do they conceal and what do they reveal?

Just after a well-known metanovelistic passage in Cervantes’ Persiles which reflects on the difference between history and fable, truth and fiction, two characters in a village plaza unfold a canvas that represents the harbour of Algiers and the corsair Dragut’s galley where they themselves allegedly figure as rowers. One of two mayors of the town, an illiterate who spent five years as a captive in Algiers, exposes them as false captives and wants to have them severely punished by the law. They explain that they decided to abandon their studies in Salamanca to see the world and go to war; as luck would have it, ‘some captives passed through there, though they, too, like us now, were probably counterfeit. We bought this canvas from them and obtained information about some things having to do with Algiers we thought would be necessary and sufficient to lend credibility to our deceit’ (III, 10, 535). One of them speaks so eloquently in their defence that the mayor has a change of heart and invites them to his house to give them such a lesson about Algiers that no one will catch them out again for their made-up stories (III, 10, 538).

Early modern European literature (poetry, theatre and novel) shows an abundance of such feigned stories about the Mediterranean. Few of its authors had direct knowledge of the terrain or social milieu they wrote about, and more than a few could be caught out in a lie about Algiers, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, or other Muslim lands. Yet oral and written sources provided so much ‘common knowledge’ that writers could locate their fictions there by naming the place and throwing in a few credible details, establishing chronotopic coordinates within which they could invent new stories with their own characters. As happens with these false captives, the lie is legitimated and the use of inventiveness is rewarded as an instrument to interest and entertain an audience eager to read or hear stories concerning encounters between Christians and Muslims – and sometimes Jews – in the Mediterranean world.

Elsewhere I’ve outlined the development and distinctive features of this kind of literature, which has a large and diverse corpus of texts (‘Literatura
Writing stories about the Mediterranean is by no means merely thematic, since all genres that do so also share generic characteristics under the rubric of what I call Mediterranean frontier literature. Irreducible to a theme, a genre – as I understand the notion – has at its disposal an array of elements (including themes) pertaining to it and uniquely managed by it. All genres have identifiable though supple characteristics, but the close etymological relationship between genre and generate should always be borne in mind: writing according to a particular genre means producing literature that probes its limits and possibilities by way of new circumstances rather than simply conforming to the hypothetical attributes of that genre. Literary genres privilege certain ways of seeing the world, certain types of characters, certain stylistic features, and above all certain types of relationships and human experience. Fundamental to each genre is its chronotope, its time-space, in which certain kinds of events tend to arise, develop and end according to the variable ideological premises and hierarchy of values of that chronotope. A genre is also defined in relation to other genres as well as aspects of life embodied in it. Mediterranean frontier literature abundantly exhibits all of these procedures and characteristics. It is not a theme within another genre but a genre that coordinates – and affects – all elements of the narrative. Moreover, any particular text may modulate from one genre to another or simultaneously take part in more than one genre. To illustrate, Don Quixote, as we know, is a novel that presents itself as though it were a history and, in shifting degrees, takes part in genres including the chivalric, the pastoral, the picaresque, the burlesque, and many others including Mediterranean frontier narrative.

The early modern Mediterranean frontier spans a vast panorama where innumerable stories arise, set in frontier zones where human beings act in situations most often issuing from slavery, where religions are multiple, where the class and honour systems are mostly absent, and where people act in situations of great risk that require audacity and improvisation. There are already a predetermined them and us, a political and religious frontier, harsh rules of play, peculiar modes of communication and conduct, means of escape and

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5 Chronotope: as is well known, in a book-length essay written in 1937 (included in English translation within The dialogical imagination), Mikhail Bakhtin surveys an enormous range of literature in relation to this term in order to demonstrate how literary genres function with diverse configurations of time-space. It is precisely the indissoluble nexus of time-space, as opposed to the conceptual isolation of each term (time, space), that constitutes the setting within which narrative events occur and gives each genre its specific narrative (or theatrical, poetic) character. In sum, chronotopes in large part define literary genres and are integral to any generic taxonomy, infusing any genre with characters, interactions, plots and meanings thinkable within the modalities of that genre. As said, chronotopes often combine or shift from one to another, affecting the conditions of genre as they do so.

6 On Mediterranean literature or philology, particularly regarding earlier periods, see also Mallette and Kinoshita.
temptations to stay. Characters can be ‘borrowed’ from other genres, but as soon as they pass into this chronotope they are transformed by it until they leave. This is a genre, then, that doesn’t require its own kind of character – except for those sorts of characters who permanently inhabit this frontier space – but rather adapts characters to its spatial surroundings. This shouldn’t be too surprising if we consider that extreme circumstances such as anarchy at sea, slavery, religious conversion and exotic eroticism turn characters into a response to what is happening to them. That said, it has to be acknowledged that this narrative genre favours noble characters or at least wealthy characters from the merchant class, that is, characters of social importance who can protagonise amorous or heroic episodes both within and outside the Mediterranean frontier zones.

The entire Mediterranean region – owing to its deep and complex history, its socio-cultural and religious composition, its modes of interaction and much more – displayed unique characteristics that were not found to the same degree in other regions such as the Caribbean, the northern coasts of Europe, or the seas of the Far East. Although corsairing and piracy, captivity and slavery, martyrdom, political-religious conflict, or affective relations that transcended social and religious divisions existed in many other parts of the world, such phenomena took on specific forms in the Mediterranean world that brought them together in an intensely charged ensemble out of which a great deal of narrative and drama issued. Among these, Mediterranean frontier literature has the peculiarity of adjusting to a chronotope associated with a particular region, e.g. to the chronotope of any particular city or country within the greater expanse of the Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean is not always a frontier space. Of the twenty or so Shakespearean plays set in the ancient or modern Mediterranean, only a few including Antony and Cleopatra, The Merchant of Venice and Othello exhibit frontier characteristics with the complex relations between Romans and Egyptians in the first of these, and the strong presence of Shylock and other Jews and the Moor Othello in the Venetian plays along with references to corsairs and the Ottoman fleet, not to mention the maritime environment, and the like. For Spanish writers, on the contrary, for over a century this frontier was a continuous obsession that found expression in the novel, among other genres. The presence of Jews in most Mediterranean cities and of Muslim corsairs or captives along Christian coastlines (both sides of Italy, southern France, eastern and southern Spain, as well as many of the islands) meant that those places were likewise saturated with frontier space.

In Spain, Mediterranean frontier literature was especially in vogue during the first half of the seventeenth century, perhaps reaching its height in the 1620s. Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Luis de Góngora, María de Zayas and Pedro Calderón de la Barca figure among the many Spanish writers who contributed to this genre with novels, plays or poems. Above all, this was not a genre independent from the rest but rather integrated with several of them, together with which it arose, flourished and declined. There’s no reason to search for
intrinsic reasons for its birth and decline, as though its themes and arguments were exhausted by the mid-seventeenth century. The genre’s vitality depended rather on that of the other genres with which it had a symbiotic relationship. Nor does it coincide as such with the historical occurrence of corsairing, slavery, religious conversion and the like, since these were already very important long before the emergence of the literary genre and continued to be important after the genre’s decline. The Barbarossa brothers were practising the corso in the western Mediterranean a century before Cervantes showed how to novelise and dramatise the experience of slavery in Muslim lands. Fiction took that long to appropriate this domain, and would have other models both ancient and modern (e.g. the Greek novel, frontier narratives) at its disposal. Especially worthy of consideration are more or less testimonial texts such as the five treatises of the Topografía e historia general de Argel (published in 1612) – attributed for decades now to Antonio de Sosa and no longer to the editor, fray Diego de Haedo – the treatises on Africa, Morocco, Tunisia and Istanbul, and the autobiographical accounts of captives and corsairs, which, if they came to be known in printed or manuscript form, provided a rich source of information, descriptions and stories. As has been shown, the Topografía in particular significantly inspired novelistic invention.

Moreover, since quite a few of these texts echo the classic novel El Abencerraje and more generally the Moorish novel, a close affinity should be acknowledged between these frontier stories situated in the Iberian Peninsula and those that take place at sea or on the other shore. In her book Vidas fronterizas en las letras españolas, María Soledad Carrasco Urgoiti deals with a variety of frontier stories in the peninsula and North Africa, demonstrating – mutatis mutandis – a historical, geographical and cultural continuity in the literary treatment of this mobile and multiple frontier. Important as distinctions are, it would be a mistake to differentiate too rigidly between peninsular Moors, Moriscos, North African Moors, and Turks (terms that are problematic anyway): these are all, in one way or another, embodiments of Muslim others, just as Jewish others also assume various forms. It could be objected that the texts about peninsular Moors and Moriscos are oriented towards Spain as a nation state with its cultural and religious identity, as opposed to texts that focus on North Africa and the Ottomans. Such a perspective, however, is blind to the Mediterranean and Islamic dimension of the Spanish Moors and Moriscos, as is the case in nearly all critical interpretation of the Moriscos episode in Cervantes’ Persiles (III, 11), for example (Hutchinson, ‘The Morisco problem’).

By way of comparison, Mediterranean frontier literature was also much in vogue in France. Already in Pantagruel (1532), Rabelais has his character Panurge tell in chapter 14 how he ingeniously escaped from the Turks7 – which

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7 This will be discussed in chapter 4, on martyrdom.
is in fact an exceptionally early and original (as well as hilarious) instance of fictional captivity and escape set in Mediterranean frontier space. Many examples of this genre in French tend to belong rather to the second half of the seventeenth century, i.e. considerably later than most of the Spanish texts. Numerous theatrical works, including Molière’s *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670) and Racine’s *Bajazet* (1672), draw particularly from Turkish materials. Other fictional writings take their inspiration from lands stretching from Persia to the Maghrib as well as back in time to Muslim Spain. A fascination with Granada in particular and a captivation with Spanish writings (including Cervantes) such as Ginés Pérez de Hita’s *Guerras civiles de Granada*, whose first volume (1595) was translated into French in 1608, proved to be especially productive (Munari, Hautcoeur), as in Madame de Lafayette’s Spanish-based romance *Zayde* (1669–71).

France’s idiosyncratic relations with Istanbul and the Maghrib undoubtedly nuanced the full range of discursive genres about Muslim lands, from treatises and memoirs on Algiers to captives’ autobiographical accounts and a variety of fictional works that exploited a gamut of themes and motifs (corsairs, captivity, religion, the harem, baths, and much else). Albert Mas, Guy Turbet-Delof\(^8\) and numerous other scholars point to many of the authors and writings that deal with relations with Muslim others. Following an Orient-Occident dichotomy, which we could translate mainly into Muslim/Christian relations and frontier chronotopes, Anne Duprat suggests that the Orient ‘furnished the Occident with the multiple resources of an alternative mythology’ – alternative to the classical legacies of Greece and Rome – in which ‘generous sultans, corsairs and soldiers of fortune, beautiful captive women and Moorish knights turn into the essential elements of a modern poetic arsenal’ that shows remarkable vitality during the early modern period. The ensemble of Maghribian stories, she continues, most aptly embodies this modernity, and powerfully contributes to the development of European narrative forms (9). The literary potential of frontier experience was not lost on early modern writers. The Mercedarian priest Antoine Quartier, captive in Tripoli (Libya) from 1660–68, remarks in his captivity narrative, *L’esclave religieux et ses aventures* (1690), on how the stories of one’s experience in ‘the land of the corsairs’ bear a close affinity with novelistic representation: ‘I tell the adventures of some Christians because they are related to my own and form an integral part of them. The reader should not be surprised if he finds that some of them sound like a novel: the land of the corsairs is the theatre of all kinds of events and novelties; the most minor capture they make of Christians

\(^8\) Curiously, back in 1973, after an extensive survey of writings in French focused on the Maghrib, Turbet-Delof concludes that ‘We have tried to show … in our Second Part, that, while lacking a masterpiece, Barbaresque Africa inspired within minor but worthy writers the sketch of an original genre’ (my emphasis, 313).
provides marvelous material capable of filling volumes.\textsuperscript{9} Similarly, Gabriel de Brémont begins his novel \textit{L’heureux esclave} (1677) by affirming: ‘For centuries Africa was regarded as a part of the world where people were as cruel and ferocious as the lions and tigers [sic] that it is so full of; but after amorous discoveries were made there, it appeared that love belongs to every country and that Barbary itself is only barbarous in name.’\textsuperscript{10} Love, now that it has been found in Africa, makes Barbary essentially civil and narratable, and in this case what brings lovers together is (happy) slavery. As Christian Zonza comments in this regard, ‘in \textit{L’heureux esclave}, count Alexandre does not want the freedom that the sultan offers him because it would take him away from the sultana he loves. Slavery thus becomes an element of the novelistic dynamic because it is a factor that multiplies adventures’ (156).

Indeed, with regard to Mediterranean frontier literature in general, love and sexuality also assume forms quite different from those described in contemporary treatises about the Maghrib or Turkey (e.g. those of Antonio de Sosa alias ‘Haedo’, Pierre Dan, Gabriel Gómez de Losada, Luis del Mármol Carvajal, Diego de Torres, Otavio Sapiencia), which convey an obsessive aversion towards homosexuality and polygamy as quintessential attributes of Islamic societies. Novels and plays, on the contrary, usually pay little attention to such practices, although they do tend to represent Muslim men and women as prone to promiscuity in a society unregulated by codes of sexually based honour. In one way or another, the amorous or erotic theme is almost indispensable in this kind of literature, and it’s mostly by way of these love relationships that the array of political, cultural and religious relations is put into play. Whereas the treatises of that period never tire of belabouring the themes of political and religious confrontation, slavery, suffering, cruelty, and so on, the novel in particular shows little patience with them. The captive’s tale in \textit{Don Quixote} alludes quite briefly to a number of the most significant events and personages of the Mediterranean world, and also sketches out how the city of Algiers works, yet if the damsel Zoraida never appeared this story would go nowhere. It matters little that she lacks verisimilitude as a character and that her religiosity and love are scarcely convincing.\textsuperscript{11} Through her

\textsuperscript{9} ‘Je rapporte les aventures de quelques chrétiens, parce qu’elles ont de la liaison avec les miennes, et qu’elles en composent une partie. Le lecteur ne doit point s’étonner s’il en trouve qui approchent du roman; le pays des Corsaires est le théâtre de toutes sortes d’événements et de nouveautés; la moindre capture qu’ils font sur les Chrétiens, fournit souvent des matières merveilleuses et capables de remplir des volumes’ (Zonza 153).

\textsuperscript{10} ‘L’Afrique passait, depuis quelques siècles, pour une partie du monde, où les gens étaient aussi cruels et aussi farouches que les lions et les tigres dont elle est remplie: mais depuis les découvertes amoureuses qu’on y a faites, il a bien paru que l’amour est de tout pays, et que la Barbarie même n’a de barbare que le nom’ (Zonza 156).

\textsuperscript{11} See Alcalá Galán, in ‘Personajes espejo’ (946–7), and Hutchinson, ‘Fronteras cervantinas: Zoraida en el exilio’.
and her relationship with the captive Ruy Pérez, the rest of the plot develops with characters as remarkable as the nameless ‘renegade’ and Zoraida’s father Agi Morato and a spectrum of intercontinental, political, religious and intercultural relations.  

Exoticism, as a *sine qua non* of the chronotope of this type of narrative and theatre, pervades all of these stories, an exoticism whose many versions ranging from phobia to philia always display traits associated with Muslim lands of the Mediterranean. What are the characters like who belong to that exotic space, and how do they behave? To what extent do *our* characters feel attracted to or repelled by that otherness, how do they understand it, and how are they helped or harmed by it? These are some of the key questions that reveal the orientation of each story and saturate the exotic ambience in which amorous relations are played out. One way or another, the affective dimensions of human relations across religious, cultural and political barriers assume an importance rarely seen in non-fictional works, or in fictional works not set in Mediterranean frontier zones.

This kind of literature opens up a geographic, aesthetic, ethical and ideological space where human relations, thought and action take place so differently that narrators or dramatic characters often have to assume the role of translators. Many of the Christian characters are subjected to the degradation of slavery, which puts them to the test, showing who they really are, what they’re worth and what they can do in a limit situation. The genre more or less obliges an author to take an ideological position regarding everything associated with Muslim *others*, their religion and ways of life. Even though the usual stereotypes are reproduced here and there ad nauseam, these works also show a variety of unusual stances. While the shift to the Mediterranean in effect gives some writers an easy way to display publicly their most orthodox credentials with regard to *Moors* and *Turks*, it also allows room for other attitudes that often downplay difference by emphasising how people from opposite sides of the divide relate to each other as fellow humans. As will be evident throughout this book and especially in the final chapter, despite the prevalent hostility between people situated in adverse relationships, there are so many credible testimonies of positive human encounters that we may be obliged to give more credence to fictional texts predisposed to emphasising such encounters than to those sorts of non-fictional works that strive to suppress them. Once again, every discursive genre and subgenre, be it fictional or non-fictional, has its means of opening itself up to – and closing itself off from – certain kinds of truths.

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12 Even the novel that most relies on Sosa’s *Topografía de Argel*, Céspedes’s *Gerardo español*, with its lengthy account of cruelties and martyrdom, is resolved by a semi-amorous relationship where an ex-lover of Gerardo, currently a wife of her Muslim master, makes possible their escape.
Regardless of the ideological projections of fictional texts and their authors, Mediterranean frontier literature offers above all a malleable chronotope in which poetic fantasy finds an abundance of options for stories in an ambience of political and religious antagonism, greater tolerance towards religious and sexual practices, vertiginous possibilities for social ascent, multilingualism, and often the defencelessness of characters (Muslims or Christians) reduced to human property in lands of others. Considering the ways that literary plots tend to play themselves out, this chronotope is neither a beginning nor an end for the protagonists, but rather a productive phase where new plots materialise or where plots originating elsewhere begin to be resolved. Though a good number of male and female characters become renegades, at least for a while, this narrative genre shows little interest in the historical reality through which most converts to Islam became integrated into their new societies without ever returning to their countries of origin. On the contrary, literary renegades, as well as literary slaves, nearly always return to their religion and country, unless those renegades are Muslim women who convert to Christianity – a common literary motif though historically rare – in which case these women leave their homelands and never return (Hutchinson, ‘Renegadas’, ‘Fronteras … Zoraida en el exilio’).

The case of renegade women converting in one direction or the other is particularly revealing both for how these texts misrepresent historical realities and for how they nonetheless reverberate with different kinds of truths and at the same time tell engaging tales. By having Zoraida, the beloved daughter of the rich and prominent Moor Agi Morato, choose a Christian captive as her future husband and escape from Algiers to Spain (Don Quixote I, 37, 39–42), Cervantes unabashedly falsifies his historical model, the anonymous daughter of the eminent Ragusan renegade Hajji Murad who married the Moroccan prince and later king ‘Abd al-Malik, with whom she had a son named Ismā‘īl, and who later allegedly married Hasan Pasha the Venetian, renegade beylerbey of Algiers and Cervantes’ slave-master. Yet, in my view, the arrival of this exquisite Moorish lady in Spain and her integration into a noble family as well as her desire to be baptised serves to draw dramatic attention to the contrary plight of the Moriscos shortly before their expulsion from Spain. She is, after all, a devotee of the Virgin Mary, ‘Lela Marién’, a highly venerated figure in Islam as well as Catholicism, and this rudimentary bond with both religions facilitates her conversion. Here we see a fascinating story of novelistic fiction finding a means (unavailable to non-fictional genres) to confront the dominant ideology of the moment with regard to the ethnic and religious composition of the state. The falsification of the original model gives way to a compelling kind of truth.

Let’s consider an example of a ‘renegade’ woman, Argelina, in Juan Pérez de Montalbán’s La desgraciada amistad (in his collection of novellas Sucesos y prodigios de amor, 1624), against the backdrop of historical renegade women.
This novella steams with eroticism, rivalry, jealousy, adultery, seductions, rape and attempted rape, intended and unintended killings, suicide, attacks at sea, captivity, and a continual shifting of amorous couples, triangles and quadrangles. Although much of the novel situates us in North Africa, mainly Tunis, all of the transgressions mentioned are committed not by Muslims but by Spanish Christians in Spain, at sea, and in Tunis. We first encounter Argelina as a *dama principal* who appears to be North African and is the lover of the congenial young king of Tunis, Celín Hamete. She falls for the new captive gardener Felisardo (a noble Spaniard), confessing to him she's not an African after all but rather a Spanish noblewoman from Zaragoza, and proceeds to tell her story filled with amorous misfortunes. Interestingly, Argelina's veil of otherness inheres in her exotic dress, her intimate relationship with the king, her lax attitude towards matters of honour, her referring to herself as an *africana*, and her name, which is none other than a feminine form derived from *Argel*, i.e. Algiers: she embodies the exoticism of the Barbary coast, and has become orientalised. Clueless regarding her Spanish origins, the noble Felisardo is by no means repulsed by what would elsewhere mark her as a woman without honour. Despite its ideological constraints, Mediterranean frontier literature, as is evident in this novella, in effect betrays a fascination with orientalism and indulges in it.¹³ Here as in other texts with renegade women, such fascination is intensified when one of our women becomes a renegade, dons sensuous garb, attracts the libido of powerful Muslim men and in other ways behaves in ways associated at that time with women in Islamic societies. Until now, Argelina’s implicit conversion to Islam has not even surfaced as something worth mentioning. As happens with other literary renegade women, Argelina’s sexual conduct and religious conduct seem to converge in the notion of infidelity: unchaste Christian women are prone to becoming *renegadas*, infidels. But ideology intervenes as writers of fiction are loath to allow renegade women to stay permanently in Muslim lands. While the rest of the Spaniards in this novel die at each other’s hands in Tunis, Argelina alone survives and manages to return repentant to recover the religion and land of her birth, renouncing what she has become along with the pleasures and unbridled eroticism of orientalised frontier space.

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¹³ As Mercedes Alcalá Galán observes, the main themes of orientalism are present in early modern literary texts as well as testimonial writings: highly sexualised women in sensuous apparel, the slave market, the harem, the bath, the odalisque, veiled anonymity in public, and so on (‘Erotics of the exotic’). Visual images of orientalism lag far behind the printed word, coming to full expression, as we know, in paintings from the late eighteenth- to the mid-twentieth-centuries – Ingres, Delacroix, Chassériau, Fortuny, Gérôme, Renoir, Matisse, among many others. Yet one can point to some pictorial images of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as orientalist, e.g. in a widespread vogue of portraits as of the mid-seventeenth century evoking the Ottoman Empire, including its regencies such as Algiers.
Argelina bears little resemblance to historical renegadas, but it’s precisely in this divergence that we can grasp the workings of ideology, genre and the imagination. Although Ottoman-Venetian relations as well as idiosyncratic practices within the Ottoman court created rather different conditions for historical renegadas from those prevailing in the western Mediterranean, the entire Muslim Mediterranean shared practices very distinct from how the Christian Mediterranean treated the women from Muslim countries who sooner or later converted to Christianity. The major differences here were that the numbers of women converts to Christianity were far smaller than those of women who converted to Islam and, more important, that Islamic societies by and large incorporated converts by offering them marriage whereas Christian societies rarely did so. Still, all too little is known about renegade women in the early modern Mediterranean. Of the few who returned to their Christian homelands, most did so against their will. A reiterated complaint of clergy is that both renegade men and women came to cherish their present happiness (the pleasures of a long life, of family, etc.) without ‘remembering’ the homeland and religion of their past (e.g. Sosa, I, 35, 35v). What’s especially wrong with such renegadas, then, seems to be that they formed families and became integrated, adapting extraordinarily well to societies that allowed them to do so.

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14 The three case studies that Eric Dursteler convincingly presents in his Renegade women, for example, largely depend on circumstances peculiar to Istanbul itself and its interactions with Venice.

15 As Bartolomé and Lucile Bennassar point out in Les Chrétiens d’Allah, renegade women most often surface fleetingly in documents as mothers or wives of notable men. Of the 1,550 cases of renegades in their study, all of them from inquisitional records produced after the voluntary or forced return of renegades to Christian lands, only fifty-nine are women, i.e. under 4 per cent. Most of these women conveyed to the inquisitors that they had been involved in long and stable marital and family relationships. Only twenty-three returned voluntarily ... Nearly all of the rest were (re)captured, quite a few of these in raids perpetrated by Christian corsairs. All but three admitted that they had foreshown Christianity. Only two expressed joy at returning to their homelands. Most surprising of all, though the Inquisition was quite lenient towards them, no fewer than thirty-one of them were resold in Sicilian slave markets (338–47)! While most men were captured as soldiers or sailors, women (and children) were captured mainly in coastal raids and on voyages, and hence there were always fewer women captives than men. Women would have made up some 10 to 20 per cent of the total number of renegades, depending on where they were and in what epoch. Unlike renegade women, renegade men disposed of a variety of means to return to their homelands if they chose to do so; but whereas men were often denied permission to convert to Islam, Christian women were actively sought after in marriage, and their conversion was encouraged. Moreover, their slave-masters rarely allowed them to be ransomed. Most seem to have adapted to a life that accepted them as concubines or spouses, and all the more so if they bore children. In Muslim countries there were no religious groups or figures dedicated to proselytising them. For more information on historical renegade women, see Hutchinson, ‘Renegadas’, 529–33.
Argelina, like other literary renegade women, acts within fairly similar geopolitical coordinates and social circumstances to those in which historical renegade women found themselves, yet her story and ideological significance differ from theirs. Unlike most renegade women referred to in contemporary treatises and inquisitional records, literary renegadas like Argelina tend to be protagonists rather than marginal figures, partly because literature set in Mediterranean frontier space seems to require (heterosexual) love stories, quite often across the Muslim-Christian divide and in an ambience charged with eroticism. With some exceptions such as Cervantes’ writings, female characters are usually more pressured than their male counterparts to renounce their religion, and do so more readily. Renegade women who adopt Islam tend to produce sultry stories full of subdued fascination, the kind of atmosphere that the writers of these texts seem to relish.

In Mediterranean frontier narrative, quite astonishingly, religion as such is often absent, functioning instead as a kind of marker or sign: one is a Christian or a Muslim or a Jew, with some internal variations. While treatises written by clerics tend to imbue with religious difference and moral judgement the kinds of space where there are Christian captives (Algiers, Tunis, ‘Constantinople’, etc.), literary texts for the most part reduce religion to these identifying markers of ‘what’ one is (e.g. Muslim or Christian) without delving into matters of ritual, belief, sin, vice, perversion, the Saviour, the Prophet, heaven and hell, the true and the false, and so on. The chronotope of the Mediterranean frontier is also a heterotopia because it is an other space, and a space of the others, where characters such as renegades can even become ‘others’, or at least other than what they were. Such is the case with Argelina. Moreover, this time-space tends to be conveyed by means of narrative and dialogue: it’s primarily a theatrical arena, a kind of stage with a cast of characters who work their way through plots conditioned not only by captivity, slavery, hostility, and a multitude of differences (linguistic, social, ethnic, religious, legal, etc.), but also by interpersonal relations that either exacerbate or transcend such differences. Unlike historical converts to Islam who mostly stayed in their adoptive lands, the idea of a fictional convert to Islam staying in the host country is almost unthinkable, especially in the case of a woman. What’s interesting in these stories is not only what becomes of the protagonists, but what they become. Themes of love and sex, normally at the core of literary plots, tend to figure importantly in these transformations and grant captive and renegade women much more salient roles than they have in non-literary texts such that they often overshadow male literary characters. Nietzsche remarks: ‘Christianity gave Eros poison to drink. He did not die of it but degenerated – into a vice’ (Beyond good and evil, #168). In Muslim

16 For the notion of heterotopia I am of course indebted to Michel Foucault’s essay ‘Different spaces’.
lands of the early modern Mediterranean, Eros seems not to have drunk that poison – to the chagrin of clerical writers, while literary authors willingly exploit this.

Chapter overview

Following upon the purposes, parameters and methods outlined in this introductory chapter, ‘Slaves’ (chapter 2) identifies the characteristics of Mediterranean frontier slavery in contrast to other types of slavery, particularly (1) the age-old trans-Saharan slavery where black slaves were taken in caravans across the Sahara desert to North Africa as well as by ship from East Africa via the Red Sea, and (2) the well-known slavery originating in West Africa and involving the massive transportation of slaves by sea to Iberia and especially the Americas. All of these as well as other kinds of slavery coexisted in the early modern Mediterranean world. My focus is on Mediterranean slavery predicated on the existence of a frontier as well as geopolitical and religious difference across spaces that were traversable and communicable: *grosso modo*, the enslavement of Muslims by Christians and Christians by Muslims, although accords between corsairing nations modified this general pattern. This kind of slavery could end in various ways ranging from ransom or escape to emancipation and, especially in Muslim lands, social integration. Race as a marker of difference was nearly absent in Mediterranean frontier slavery, while cultural and religious differences were substantial but relative, allowing for individuals to adapt themselves to one degree or another to life across the divide. I believe that this particular kind of frontier slavery was historically unique even to the Mediterranean as of the early sixteenth century. My main interest in this chapter is to focus on a range of human experience brought about by this kind of slavery, including what it meant to *become* a slave and to *live* as one, as so many writers reveal on both sides of the divide. Given the scant documentary and scholarly attention that women slaves tend to receive, part of the chapter is devoted to the ways their slavery is represented: both in fact and fiction, men and women often experienced slavery in very different ways.

‘Renegades’ (chapter 3) discusses the pervasive phenomenon of religious conversion, from Islam to Christianity but much more massively from Christianity to Islam, though many slaves were denied the right to convert. Keenly aware as I am of the pejorative tones of the word ‘renegade’, I use it in lieu of alternative, less recognisable terms to refer to converts in *either* direction. The unities and divisions of the early modern Mediterranean come into relief through the protagonism of these fascinating figures who slip through the conceptual categories most often associated with them such as syncretism, hybridity and assimilation, not to mention models of the ‘divided self’.

‘Popular religion’ nearly always superseded notions of theological belief in
the case of renegades, few of whom had any formal education, let alone religious guidance. Renegades rarely wrote about themselves, requiring us to find out about them from other kinds of sources generally hostile to them, including inquisitional records. Renegades embody the characteristics of the Mediterranean frontier and the capabilities, consciousness and versatility fomented by frontier zones. Drawing from a variety of genres, this chapter examines a range of renegade ‘profiles’ – women and men from many parts of the Mediterranean world who were originally Christians, Muslims or Jews. Some converted back and forth twice or more, others were crypto-Muslims escaped from Christian lands but recaptured and tried for apostasy, some became renowned corsairs who raided their native lands, some were displaced Muslim princes who emigrated and adopted Christianity, and yet others rose to the heights of power and prestige in the Ottoman Empire. The widespread phenomenon of renegades pushes the problematic of otherness to its extremes and undermines nearly every notion of ‘identity’. The chapter finally turns to how to conceptualise this ‘renegade’ enigma in all its diversity in a highly confrontational Mediterranean that nonetheless had islands, caves and temples with shared religious practice.

‘Martyrs’ (chapter 4) looks into the portrayals of Christian martyrdom in Muslim lands. This was by no means reciprocal because in the early modern era there were virtually no Muslim martyrs other than those who were conventionally deemed martyrs for having been killed in battle. Rather, Christian martyrdom in Muslim territories has to be understood within the visceral rivalry between Catholics and Protestants in Europe whereby the martyrs of one side were the heretics of the other. Catholics looked especially to Muslim territories in order to produce fresh martyrs, their main strategy being to convince renegades to revert to Christianity and proclaim this loudly, thus giving Muslim authorities little choice but to execute them for apostasy. Accounts of Christian martyrdom are abundant. Some of these martyrs had no desire to be martyrs but found themselves in circumstances in which they were to be put to death and, of these, a few were able to perform their own martyrdom as expected. Others were executed for trying to kill their masters and escape, but were likewise considered martyrs. Of special interest are cases where a particular act of ‘martyrdom’ is told from radically different points of view, e.g. by a Muslim, a Catholic and a Protestant. Martyrological accounts hyperbolise the supposed cruelty of Muslims, and above all that of renegades (i.e. ex-European ex-Christians). Yet these texts show that martyrdom often involves a spiritualisation of cruelty and self-inflicted torment where martyrs suffer and simultaneously observe their own suffering.

‘Counternarratives’ (chapter 5) highlights and analyses the very opposite of intolerance and cruelty, namely ‘exceptions to the rule’: acts of kindness, generosity, love, courtesy, respect, sympathy, empathy, mutual self-interest, and so on, any of which would most likely involve tolerance and understanding.
The chapter first explores how Cervantes’ narratives about Moriscos in his last two novels – the episodes of Ricote and his daughter Ana Félix in part II of *Don Quixote* and the voluntary exile of crypto-Muslims in the *Persiles* – circumvent the varieties of ‘official discourse’ produced by apologists of the expulsion (Jaime Bleda, Pedro Aznar Cardona, Gaspar Aguilar and Damián Fonseca, among others). The generally misunderstood episode in the *Persiles* reveals the Islamic and Mediterranean dimension in which the Moriscos are portrayed here. A variety of other counternarratives are then presented with the purpose of teasing out their situational logic as well as the ethical and emotional dimensions of each event. One such encounter involves commanders who are enemies but briefly fraternise, allowing for negotiations, agreements, courtesy, largesse, congeniality, a long conversation over a meal, and so on. Another shows people in a position of power who are generous to slaves because they themselves have relatives or friends who are victims on the other side; this is understood as reciprocity, even when the context is extremely tenuous and indirect. This also happens among members of all three religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam). Another type of encounter arises from a solidarity between enemies and a pact to protect each other, even to exchange religions with each other. To this can be added countless instances of love or affection that arise within objectively asymmetrical relations. The series of counternarratives presented here unsettle the conventional views of the early modern Mediterranean, enquiring into the kinds of affect and logic that give rise to such apparent anomalies. In a Mediterranean in which there was no holy war on either side, where Janus-like renegades were arguably the protagonists for over a century, where commerce knew no boundaries, where cultural and even religious similarities were constantly acknowledged, spontaneous, improvised encounters of these kinds were bound to happen. In sum, this chapter explores the kinds of understanding and affect that could arise – and could only arise – in the generally hostile circumstances of frontier zones.