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Language-learning, orality, and multilingualism in early modern Anglophone narratives of Mediterranean captivity

John Gallagher

INTRODUCTION

On a Spanish ship bound for Cadiz in the middle of the seventeenth century, an English sailor named Edward Coxere heard the news of Oliver Cromwell's death. One of the Spaniards on board the ship called to him and his fellow-sailors, and uttered the words '"*Aie bona Nova Cromwell sta morto granda Feasta Enferno*", which is to say "There is good news: Cromwell is dead. There is a great feast in Hell".'[1] Though the Spaniard did not speak in English, Coxere understood him: he took pride in being what he called a 'linguister'.[2] Sent to France at fourteen, where he lodged with a family in Le Havre and learned the language, he was later sent to the Low Countries to train as a wine-cooper, but 'I not settling my mind to trade, my lot fell to the sea'.[3] He joined the crew of a Dutch ship, and later recalled that 'though I had French and English, I had Dutch to learn to understand those I was withal, which I soon got'.[4] He picked up Spanish, and his skill as a 'linguister' aided him as he served (willingly and unwillingly) in the ships of many nations: he recalled how 'I served the Spaniards against the French, then the Hollanders against the English', then the English against the Dutch, until 'last I was taken by the Turks, where I was forced to serve then against English, French, Dutch, and Spaniards, and all Christendom'.[5] As a captive, Coxere served in Tunis – there, between the captives' quarters and the shipyards where he was put to work, he added a new language to his linguister's list. He called it 'Lingofrank' or 'Lingwa frank': Lingua Franca.[6]

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[1] E. H. W. Meyerstein (ed.), *Adventures by Sea of Edward Coxere* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1945), 75–6.

[2] The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the first use of 'linguister' to John Winthrop in 1649.

[3] Meyerstein, *Adventures by Sea*, 4.

[4] *Ibid.*, 8.

[5] *Ibid.*, 25.

[6] *Ibid.*, 64, 57.

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Coxere's multilingual experiences were emblematic of the early modern Mediterranean. He was proud of his languages, claiming that 'I spoke [French] as well as if I had been born in France', and that his Dutch was so good that he was able to disguise himself as a Dutchman when he returned home from an early voyage.[7] Whatever his levels of competence in each language (a critic might point out that his rendition of the Spanish announcement about Cromwell is impressionistic rather than strictly accurate), he seems to have been able to act as a 'linguister' when the situation demanded it. He boasted of his knowledge of 'the names of ropes and sea-phrases' in Dutch, mastering the sailor's vocational jargon in that language before he managed to do so in English, which caused him some embarrassment when he was employed on an English vessel.[8] The multilingual abilities Coxere claimed to possess allowed him to ingratiate himself with sailors of different nations and to serve under different flags, and may even have smoothed his way as a captive in Muslim North Africa. His linguistic competences were likely not the polished and scholarly competences prized by Renaissance humanists or by advocates of elite educational travel: instead, they reflected what Eric Dursteler has called 'the more mundane, quotidian reality of communication', in which 'individuals who might often not be able to pass a simple modern language examination nonetheless developed an ability to bridge these linguistic differences well enough to achieve their primary objective, "effective communication"'. Dursteler describes a situation in which 'individuals ... were multilingual not in the sense that they were polyglots who had mastered multiple languages, but rather that they were able to navigate this vibrant linguistic world through varying levels of ability in one or more regional languages, a lingua franca, or even through the use of gesture'.[9] Crucially, too, Coxere's competences were largely acquired and exercised in oral contexts: he presented himself first and foremost as a *speaker* (as distinct from a reader or writer) of foreign languages.

Coxere was someone who learnt to navigate the linguistic world of the Mediterranean, and a key moment in his narrative of life as a 'linguister' was the period of his captivity in Tunis in 1657–58, where he learnt the language known as the Lingua Franca. As a Christian captive in a Muslim city, he became one of the thousands of English-speakers captured by North African ships in the early modern period: sold into households and captive quarters in North Africa and beyond, some converted, many died, some escaped, and only a few

[7] *Ibid.*, 4, 18–20.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[9] Eric Dursteler, 'Speaking in tongues: language and communication in the early modern Mediterranean', *Past & Present*, 217 (2012), 76. On linguistic competence as a historical category, see John Gallagher, *Learning Languages in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2019), Ch. 3.

wrote down their stories for posterity.[10] Narratives of captivity have had significant attention from linguists, historians, and literary scholars in recent years. They are troublesome sources, offering what often purport to be first-hand documentary accounts of life in captivity. Their style, content, and the motivations behind their writing are all open to question: authors may have written to entertain or scandalise, to spur national feeling or sectarian hatred, to justify their decisions and behaviours during the period of their captivity, or to rehabilitate their reputations on their return.[11] The association between captivity and conversion to Islam meant that there were good reasons why a returned traveller might insist in print that they had never 'turned Turk', or claim that their decision to do so was the result of physical force or malicious misunderstanding.[12] But they remain tantalising, not least because – as Nabil Matar argues – 'the *corpus captivitis* provides the most extensive description of England's early modern encounter with Islam and Muslims in North Africa'.[13] These texts dramatised the encounter between English Protestants and North African and Ottoman Muslims for an English reading audience; whatever the difficulties they present to the historian, they remain rich sources for thinking about early modern Mediterranean encounters between people, cultures, faiths, and languages.

Captivity was, fundamentally, a linguistic experience. In this – despite its involuntary nature – it had much in common with other the other kinds of early modern mobility discussed in this special issue. Language-learning and linguistic mediation have not generally been central to accounts of early modern mobility, though it is difficult to think of experiences of mobility that

[10] For a recent overview of the scholarship on Mediterranean captivity, see Daniel Hershenzon, 'Towards a Connected History of Bondage in the Mediterranean: Recent Trends in the Field', *History Compass*, 15 (2017), doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12391. Key English-language editions of captivity narratives are Daniel J. Vitkus (ed.), *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), and Khalid Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives in North Africa: Narratives of Enslavement, 1735–1830* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). On captive numbers, see the discussion in Nabil Matar, *British Captives from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1563–1760* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 21–32.

[11] On Anglophone captivity narratives as a genre, see Nabil Matar, 'Introduction: England and Mediterranean Captivity, 1577–1704', in Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*, 32–40; Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600–1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002), 12–17. The generic difficulties and of the captivity narrative and its history as a genre are discussed in Lisa Voigt, *Writing Captivity in the Early Modern Atlantic: Circulations of Knowledge and Authority in the Iberian and English Imperial Worlds* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 40–98. On captivity narratives as a genre in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century North America, see Alden T. Vaughan and Edward W. Clark (eds.), *Puritans among the Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676–1724* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1986), 1–28; for a later period, see Daniel E. Williams (ed.), *Liberty's Captives: Narratives of Confinement in the Print Culture of the Early Republic* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2006). Return from travel is increasingly an area of interest for scholars of early modern mobility: see, for instance, Mark Williams, 'The Inner Lives of Early Modern Travel', *Historical Journal* (forthcoming, available on early view at doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X18000237).

[12] On the 'identity crises' of many returning captives, see Robert Spindler, 'Identity crises of homecomers from the Barbary Coast', in Mario Klarer (ed.), *Piracy and Captivity in the Mediterranean 1550–1810* (London: Routledge, 2018), 128–43.

[13] Matar, 'Introduction: England and Mediterranean Captivity, 1577–1704', 6.

were not characterised by the encounter between languages.[14] Travellers within and beyond early modern Europe were constantly negotiating polyglot spaces and multilingual geographies: just as they experienced a ship as a site where passengers and sailors spoke their own languages and jargons, so too did they navigate areas where varieties of language could indicate regional affiliations or confessional convictions.[15] The competences acquired through mobility varied depending on the circumstances, needs, ability, and opportunity of the traveller. They reflected the nature of the traveller's encounter with other cultures: who they spoke to and how, what they sought to get from the encounter, and often what they hoped to bring home from it. In early modern Europe, mobility was a multilingual experience. Captivity was too. Anglophone captives found themselves thrust into bewilderingly multilingual environments, working alongside others and serving masters who often did not speak their language. Many captives became language-learners by necessity. Linda Colley notes 'the centrality of linguistic capacity to captives' chance of survival',[16] and captivity narratives are full of stories in which some knowledge of a local language enabled the captive to protect themselves from harm, build relationships, disguise themselves, plot or effect escape, or improve their situation. Captivity narratives are rich sources for linguistic detail, too, with their authors noting the street-cries of North African cities, the language of slave markets, the linguistic mingling of captives and captors, and the language of other cultures and another religion: some authors of captivity narratives may have performed their knowledge of Arabic or Ottoman Turkish in their writing as a means of demonstrating the truth of their account.[17] Accounts of Mediterranean captivity offer unique insights into language-learning and its meanings for English identities abroad.

Captivity narratives are unique and important sources for the history of language-learning for two reasons. Firstly, in the corpus of captivity narratives we find first-person accounts of language-learning and multilingual communication by a diverse group of people. Captivity narratives record the experiences of men, women and children, of English Muslims, of sailors and passengers from a range of backgrounds. Language-learning was a feature of

[14] On language-learning and early modern travel, see Gallagher, *Learning Languages in Early Modern England*, Ch. 4.

[15] The work of Peter Burke and his collaborators has been essential in raising these questions for social and cultural historians: see, for instance, Peter Burke, *Languages and Communities in early modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Peter Burke and Roy Porter (eds.), *The Social History of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Peter Burke and Roy Porter (eds.), *Language, Self, and Society: A Social History of Language* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991); Peter Burke and Roy Porter (eds.), *Languages and Jargons: Contributions to a Social History of Language* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995); Peter Burke and R. Po-Chi Hsia (eds.), *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). The range of languages and varieties in use in early modern Europe is considered in John Considine, *Small Dictionaries and Curiosity: Lexicography and Fieldwork in Post-Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[16] Colley, *Captives*, 81.

[17] Matar, 'Introduction: England and Mediterranean Captivity, 1577–1704', 3.

lives across the social spectrum in early modern England and Europe, but accounts of the language-learning experiences of non-elite learners are often difficult to come by.[18] Secondly, captivity narratives are rare in depicting a form of language-learning which, for most captives, was predominantly oral.[19] Captives rarely had access to pedagogical texts in the languages they learnt, even where texts like these were available.[20] Most followed no formalised or text-based language-learning process. Instead, captives learnt from their fellow-captives, their masters and overseers, and from observing their environment. Learning languages in this way, without significant textual interference, may well have been central to early modern experiences of travel and migration for many people, but it is a process which was rarely described by those who had experienced it. Captivity narratives have often been read for their insights into the big picture of cultural and confessional encounter in the early modern period. In this article, I read them for language: for what they have to say about the everyday business of learning and communication in a powerfully multilingual world. By using captivity narratives to think about polyglot oral encounters, oral language-learning, and oral competences, we can frame questions and find insights into the intertwined histories of language-learning and experiences of mobility which underlay cultural encounters in the early modern period. Those who had experienced captivity had, in Nabil Matar's words, 'heard the Moorish other "speak"'.[21] What they heard, what they did with it, how they told their stories, and what they might mean are the questions addressed by this article.

1. CAPTIVE COMPETENCES

Being captured was a linguistically disorienting experience. Emanuel d'Aranda, a Flemish captive, recalled his amazement aboard an Algerine corsair in the days following his seizure:

[18] On language-learning as a feature of everyday life in early modern Europe, see Gallagher, *Learning Languages in Early Modern England*, introduction.

[19] On early modern oralities, see the essays in Elizabeth Horodowich (ed.), *Speech and Oral Culture in Early Modern Europe and Beyond*, special issue of *Journal of Early Modern History* 16 (2012); Virginia Reinburg, *French Books of Hours: Making an Archive of Prayer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Tom Cohen and Lesley Twomey (eds.), *Spoken Word and Social Practice: Orality in Europe (1400–1700)* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Stefano Dall'Aglio, Brian Richardson, and Massimo Rospocher (eds.), *Voices and Texts in Early Modern Italian Society* (Routledge, 2017); Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000); Adam Fox and Daniel Woolf (eds.), *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain 1500–1850* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002).

[20] I am grateful to Stefan Hanß for sharing with me a draft of his article, 'Ottoman Language Learning in Early Modern Germany', which shows that this was not necessarily the case for German authors of captivity narratives, a number of whom became and remained closely engaged with the textual worlds of Ottoman Turkish and Arabic.

[21] Matar, 'Introduction: England and Mediterranean Captivity, 1577–1704', 4.

> I was all this while as it were in a dream, wherein a man sees strange apparitions, which cause fear, admiration, and curiosity, reflecting on the several Languages (for they spoke the Turkish, the Arabian, Lingua Franca, Spanish, French, Dutch and English), the strange habits, the different Armes, with the ridiculous Ceremonies at their Devotions[22]

At the moment of captivity, the voices and languages of captives and captors mingled. Francis Knight described the cries of joy of his captors on their taking of his ship, 'Alla, Alla, Mahomet, and Rosallah, which is God, God, alone'.[23] For some, the voices that hailed their entry into captivity spoke in languages that were more familiar to them, though the content of their speech was not comforting: d'Aranda recorded that his ship's capture was heralded by the voice of 'a Christian Slave, who cry'd out in the Flemish tongue, *Str pht voor Argiers* [sic]*, that is, Deliver your selves up for Algiers*', while Elizabeth Marsh met an interpreter who spoke to her in her own language, though she recalled his 'bad English' as part of the experience of being taken from her ship.[24] And while a shared language could be used to make communication run more smoothly, it might also be an instrument of deception. Thomas Phelps, who was captured in 1684, wrote that his ship spotted what they believed to be an Algerian vessel – and thus no threat in a time of peace. The other ship sent a boat to them, containing 'an antient Moor, who formerly had been a slave in England and spoke good English, and who was set at liberty by our late Gracious King Charles the 2d'.[25] The 'antient Moor' – as well as standing as a reminder that Christian Europeans were not the only ones made captives (and language-learners) – turned out to be a Trojan horse, tricking Phelps and his shipmates into becoming captives of a Moroccan vessel based out of Meknès. European languages in Muslim mouths were could be a cause of confusion and fear for newly-taken captives. At the taking of Joseph Pitts' ship, the corsair captain – 'a Dutch renegade and able to speak English' – was the first to speak to them, and the simple language of their capture reflected the ill-treatment the captives would face on their arrival in Algiers: 'The very first words they spake, and the first thing they did, was Beating us with Ropes, saying, *Into boat you English dogs!*'[26]

Once they arrived on land, linguistic competence could shape a captive's fate. Having made landfall, many captives would be sold, and their wealth,

[22] Emanuel d'Aranda, *The History of Algiers and it's Slavery*, tr. John Davies (London, 1666), 6.

[23] Francis Knight, *A relation of seaven yeares slaverie under the Turkes of Argeire, suffered by an English Captive Merchant* (London, 1640), 23.

[24] D'Aranda, *The History of Algiers*, 4; Elizabeth Marsh, *The Female Captive: A Narrative of Facts which Happened in Barbary in the Year 1756, Written by Herself* (London, 1769), in Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives in North Africa*, 126.

[25] Thomas Phelps, *A True Account of the Captivity of Thomas Phelps, at Machaness in Barbary, and of his Strange Escape in Company of Edward Baxter and Others* (1685), 2.

[26] Joseph Pitts, *A True and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mohammetans ... With an Account of the Author's being taken Captive, the Turks Cruelty to him, and of his Escape* (Exeter, 1704), 3.

status, background, family, and skills were all factors which determined the price (or the ransom) that they would ultimately command.[27] Robert C. Davis writes that captives' masters 'were willing patiently to interrogate their recently purchased slave for hours, using whatever language or interpreter would function and hoping to persuade or trick him into revealing what abilities he had'.[28] Captives found themselves immediately in a situation in which their capacity to speak for themselves and to define who they were could determine their fate. For this reason, Emanuel d'Aranda warned that 'A new Slave ought to be distrustful of all people': 'It is... necessary he should dissemble a while, till he be sufficiently inform'd whether they [those that speak to him] be impostors, or may be trusted'.[29] D'Aranda's advice echoes the debates in the advice literature aimed at travellers on the early modern European continent about the place and practice of dissimulation in travel: Fynes Moryson wrote in 1617 that 'a traveller must sometimes hide his money, change his habit, dissemble his Country, and fairely conceale his Religion, but this hee must doe onely when necessity forceth'; in other words, the traveller could be permitted to dissemble, 'yet onely in dangerous places, and among suspected persons'. Captives certainly found themselves in danger and with reason to be suspicious; they might have taken literally Moryson's maxim that '[h]e that cannot dissemble, cannot live'.[30]

A lack of linguistic competence could have a significant impact on the captive's future. Adam Elliot described his being offered for sale, saying that prospective buyers at market 'call'd upon me at pleasure to examine me what trade I was of, and to see what labour my hands were accustomed to'.[31] Elliot, lacking the language to explain his situation, became the victim of others' lies: somebody spread the story that he was a relative of the Duke of Norfolk, driving up the potential ransom he could be expected to command.[32] Elliot was unable to make his own case, due to 'my defect in the Castilian language wherein [his master] was exquisite'; as a result, his master 'provided a Jew

[27] Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*, 47–62.

[28] *Ibid.*, 95.

[29] D'Aranda, *The History of Algiers*, 135.

[30] Fynes Moryson, *An Itinerary written by Fynes Moryson Gent. First in the Latine Tongue, and then Translated By him into English: containing his ten yeeres travell through the twelve dominions of Germany, Bohmerland, Sweitzerland, Netherland, Denmarke, Poland, Italy, Turky, France, England, Scotland, and Ireland* (London, 1617), Pt. III, Bk. I, 29. On dissimulation and disguise in early modern Europe, see Perez Zagorin, 'The Historical Significance of Lying and Dissimulation', *Social Research* 63 (1996), 863–912; Miriam Eliav-Feldon, *Renaissance Impostors and Proofs of Identity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2009); Justin Stagl, *A History of Curiosity: the Theory of Travel 1550–1800* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 171–208. On Moryson and dissimulation, see Mareile Pfannebecker, 'Lying by Authority: Travel Dissimulations in Fynes Moryson's *Itinerary*', *Renaissance Studies*, 31 (2016), 569–85.

[31] Adam Elliot, *A modest vindication of Titus Oates the Salamanca-Doctor from Perjury: or an Essay to Demonstrate him only forsworn in several instances* (London, 1682), 7.

[32] *Ibid.*, 7–10.

(who had been in Europe and spoke good Latin) to treat with me'.[33] The attempt to use Spanish and Latin here indicates that these tense moments of bargaining were multilingual, with a variety of strategies – from the use of a shared language or gesture to the involvement of interpreters – employed as potential buyers worked to build up the fullest possible picture of their captive's history. As so often, the mediators in these situations were not necessarily formally trained interpreters, but other polyglot individuals living trans-imperial or transcultural Mediterranean lives.[34]

The importance of being able to tell one's story was emphasised in the account of Richard Hasleton, who had been a captive in North Africa and returned to Europe, only to suffer torture and imprisonment at the hands of the Spanish Inquisition in Majorca. After escaping this predicament, he found himself again on the coastline near Algiers, where – having just made landfall, and carrying a weapon – he came across an elderly man. In his account of their meeting, Hasleton slipped into the shared language he had learnt in his previous captivity: 'I spake unto him in the toung of Franke, and called him to me. I having my hatchet in my hand cast it from me'. The man approached him and, 'taking me by the hand, demaunded very gently what I would have', and Hasleton, 'perceiving that he did even at the first sight pitty my poore and miserable estate, tolde him all things that had happened unto me'. In Hasleton's story, his competence in 'the toung of Franke' (the Mediterranean Lingua Franca, discussed below) allowed him to lay out the facts of his story to this elderly Muslim: 'how I was an English man, how I had bin Captive in Argire, how I chanced to come to Genua, their sending me to Maiorque, and all the torment which I had suffered there, and finally, my escape from thence, with all the rest that followed'.[35] Unlike Elliot, who was rendered dumb at a moment when the ability to tell his story was crucial, Hasleton was able to employ his linguistic skill (not to mention the careful use of gesture) to head off a potential conflict.

In these narratives, the first days of captivity were often coloured by incomprehension and misunderstanding. William Okeley recalled how, having been brought to his new master's home, he had fallen almost immediately into a sectarian argument. Okeley wrote that his master's father 'began to insult over me with insupportable scorn, reflecting upon me because I was a Christian, and cast out some expressions which did really reflect upon the person of my Rdeemer, [sic] though I have heard worse since'. At this point in his captivity,

[33] *Ibid.*, 9. The reference to Latin here is interesting, indicating Elliott's own pre-existing competence in the language, as well as the continuing utility of spoken Latin in the early modern Mediterranean at a moment when Latin was gradually losing ground as a spoken lingua franca in continental Europe. On Latin in early modern Europe, see Jürgen Leonhardt, *Latin: Story of a World Language*, trans. Kenneth Kronenberg (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2013), 184–244.

[34] On interpreters and mediators, see E. Natalie Rothman, 'Interpreting Dragomans: Boundaries and Crossings in the Early Modern Mediterranean', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51 (2009), 771–800.

[35] Richard Hasleton, *Strange and wonderfull things. Happened to Richard Hasleton, borne at Braintree in Essex, in his ten yeares travaile in many forraine countries* (London, 1595), sig. Dr–Dv.

'[m]y Neck was not yet bowed, nor my Heart broken to the Yoke of Bondage; I could not well brook, because I had not ben used then to such language'. However much of these comments he could understand, he was unable to respond properly in kind, 'because I could not express myself in the Moresco, or Lingua Franc'. Instead, he turned to gesture, writing that 'I supplyed it with Signs; and imitating the Coblers Yarke, I signified both waies as well as I could, That their Prophet was but a Cobler'. Through rude gestures, he hoped to get across his belief that Muhammad had simply 'patch'd up a Cento of Jewish, and Monkish Fopperies, which was now their Religion'.[36] Adam Elliot, beaten by the merchant who had bought him, became so furious that 'I vented my passion in the most rash inconsiderate expressions, the most provoking, opprobrious and menacing terms, that my anger and my little Spanish could accommodate me with, daring him to dispatch me, for my life then seem'd a grievous burthen to me'.[37] We might read in both of these accounts a returned captive's attempt to portray himself as an indomitable Protestant, boldly defending his faith in the face of the infidel's taunts. Whatever the reality, it is telling that both men framed their responses as emerging from their lack of suitable language, suggesting a relationship between the emotional turmoil of the first days in captivity, the captive's frustration at their dislocation and powerlessness, their clumsy attempts at communication, and the shaming and inhibiting effect of their linguistic incompetence.

In navigating new and unfamiliar urban speechscapes, captives also encountered other languages and risked misunderstanding and miscommunication. Some captives, to pay for their bed and board, performed jobs that took them into the noisy world of the city streets.[38] These few hours' partial freedom allowed some measure of engagement with the world beyond the site of work and the captives' quarters, and accounts of captivity show that captives were involved and attentive participants in the street life of cities like Algiers. The French captive Chastelet des Boys was told by his master to carry water from the public fountains around the city: 'Like the others, I therefore displayed [myself] along the streets, crying at the top of my voice, *Ab el ma* (which is to say, who wants some water?)'.[39] In taking on this role, he learnt at least one spoken Arabic phrase which would have helped him ply his trade and also to understand at least one element of the urban speechscape.[40] One of Emanuel

[36] Okeley, *Eben-ezer*, 12–13.

[37] Elliot, *A modest vindication*, 8.

[38] Emanuel D'Aranda wrote that 'we had three hours every day allow'd us to shift for our Livelihood; so that every one was to make the best advantage he could of his industry': D'Aranda, *The History of Algiers*, 12.

[39] Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*, 92.

[40] Other travellers took note of street-cries and showed an interest in the speechscapes of cities they visited. Samuel Pepys owned a 1612 print of Roman street-sellers with their cries appended: Melissa Calaresu, 'Costumes and customs in print: travel, ethnography, and the representation of street-sellers in early modern Italy', in Roeland Harms, Joad Raymond, and Jeroen Salman (eds.), *Not Dead Things: The Dissemination of Popular Print in England and Wales, Italy, and the Low Countries, 1500–1820* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 181–209. On travelling language-learners paying attention to voices and cries in the early modern city, see Gallagher, *Learning Languages in Early Modern England*, Ch. 4.

D'Aranda's fellow captives had been appointed to lead a mule through the streets, but not knowing that in Algiers' narrow, dirty streets 'the custome is, that when one leads a Mule or Camel loaden, he ever and anon cries *Belec*, that is, Take heed there', the inexperienced mule-driver 'overthrew a Turk in the dirty Streets'.[41] The man he knocked over angrily threatened the captive with a knife until he was calmed by a group of passers-by, who said 'What would you do, do you not see that this Christian is yet a Savage, and that he does not know the custome?' By this, they meant that the slave was still wearing his Spanish clothes and had yet to change into a captive's habit, which – alongside his ignorance of the city's verbal codes – marked him out as a new arrival.[42]

Over time, captives might come to understand their aural environment better. Edward Coxere transcribed some of the abuse he claimed to have received in Lingua Franca from Muslims in the streets of Tunis, saying that 'Sometimes they would give me the name of *Cania sinsa featha*, that is to say dog without faith, because I would not believe in Mahomet', while Joseph Pitts recalled how 'the *Cull Ougles*[43] will, upon the least Provocation, twit the *Renegadoes*, with words like these: '*Eir youle bullersen catchersen*,' i.e. Thou wilt run away, if thou knewest how. And at other times they will jear the *Renegadoes* with *Domus eate, the hoe dishing dader*, i.e. There is yet Swines-flesh in thy Teeth, (meaning they have still a tang of Christianity)'.[44] By the time they came to write their accounts, former captives like Pitts could present themselves as knowledgeable translators of urban noise for an inquisitive English readership. In doing so, they demonstrated the competence they acquired during the period of their captivity while also adding verisimilitude to their accounts. The linguistic confusion and halting storytelling of captivity's first moments and days was replaced by a competence in cross-cultural translation, and the confident presentation of the returned captive's multilingual experiences.

[41] D'Aranda, *The History of Algiers*, 17. Compare Thomas Dallam's observation, on visiting Algiers in 1599, that Moors with carts going to market 'often would cale to the people, and say, balocke, balocke, that is to saye, bewarr, or take heede': J. Theodore Bent (ed.), *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1893), 14.

[42] D'Aranda, *The History of Algiers*, 17.

[43] 'Cull Ougles' refers to the Ottoman Turkish term *kuloğlu*, meaning 'son of a slave' or 'son of a servant'. It referred to the sons of Ottoman soldiers and North African women: M'hamed Oualdi, 'Kuloğlu', in Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (3rd edn., 2018). http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27165. For Pitts's own definition, see Pitts, *A True and Faithful Account*, 160.

[44] Meyerstein, *Adventures at Sea of Edward Coxere*, 58; Pitts, *A True and Faithful Account*, 161. Paul Auchterlonie provides equivalents of these phrases in modern Turkish: Paul Auchterlonie, *Encountering Islam: Joseph Pitts: an English Slave in 17th-Century Algiers and Mecca* (London: Arabian Publishing, 2012), 246.

2. LEARNING THE LINGUA FRANCA

The Mediterranean has long been understood by historians as a 'contact zone', a region in which individuals and groups differing in culture, religion, and language, encountered each other and circulated through trade, travel, and warfare.[45] The middle sea in the early modern period was a site of crossings, of hybridity, of conflict and compromise. It was also a polyglot sea: the traveller might hear Portuguese, Spanish, Arabic, Greek, Ottoman, Italian, the languages of the Balkans, or any number of regional varieties; even one ship could seem at times like a miniature Babel. Among the languages that bewildered Emanuel d'Aranda when he was first captured was 'Lingua Franca', which refers to the pidgin language spoken throughout the Mediterranean and in particular in the cities of North Africa.[46] Now known as the Mediterranean Lingua Franca, this was the same language learnt by Edward Coxere during the period of his captivity in Tunis. The Spanish monk Diego de Haëdo wrote a description of early seventeenth-century Algiers in which he describes the language as being spoken everywhere in the city:

> This lingua franca is so common that there is no house where it is not used. There are no houses where one or more Christians live and few houses where there is a Turk or a Moor, large or small, man or woman, even children, in which it is not spoken to a greater or lesser extent (most people speak it quite well). It is the means by which they communicate with the Christians.[47]

The Lingua Franca was a shared language which facilitated communication between Christians and Muslims in a cosmopolitan city like Algiers, with its large and transient population which included captives, renegades, traders, Berbers, travellers, and subjects of the sultan from elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire. Known to English writers of the period by many names

[45] For an overview of Mediterranean historiographies, see Molly Greene, 'The Mediterranean Sea', in David Armitage, Alison Bashford, and Sujit Sivasundaram (eds.), *Oceanic Histories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 134–55.

[46] The best recent work on the Lingua Franca is Jocelyne Dakhlia, *Lingua Franca: histoire d'une langue métisse en Méditerranée* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2008); Karla Mallette also offers an overview of the language as early modern people and modern scholars have understood it, as well as its relationship to the category of 'Frank' in the early modern Mediterrean, in Karla Mallette, 'Lingua Franca', in Peregrine Horden and Sharon Kinoshita (eds.), *A Companion to Mediterranean History* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 330–44. Classic work on the Lingua Franca was done by Hugo Schuchardt in the nineteenth and early twentieth century: see Hugo Schuchardt, *Pidgin and creole languages: selected essays*, ed. trans. Glenn G. Gilbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 65–88. Two useful recent perspectives on the Lingua Franca can be found in Joanna Nolan, 'Lingua Franca – a not so simple pidgin', *SOAS Working Papers in Linguistics* 17 (2015), 99–111; and Rachel Selbach, 'On a Famous Lacuna: Lingua Franca the Mediterranean Trade Pidgin?', in Esther-Miriam Wagner, Bettina Beinhoff, and Ben Outhwaite (eds.), *Merchants of Innovation: The Languages of Traders* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2017), 252–71. On 'Franks' as a term and category, see Eva Johanna Holmberg, 'In the Company of Franks: British Identifications in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1600', *Studies in Travel Writing*, 14 (2012), 363–74.

[47] Diego de Haëdo, quoted in Schuchardt, *Pidgin and Creole Languages*, 77–8.

– they called it 'Lingofrank', 'corrupt Spanish', and 'the common language', among others – the Mediterranean Lingua Franca (hereafter Lingua Franca) was a contact language for a contact zone.[48]

As the term 'corrupt Spanish' – used by John Whitehead in his late seventeenth-century manuscript 'relation of Barbary' – suggests, the Lingua Franca had its roots in Romance languages, Spanish and Italian in particular.[49] Thomas Dallam recorded in his account of his journey to Constantinople that his group was addressed in Rhodes by 'tow stout Turkes' who asked them 'Parlye Francko, sinyore? which is: Can ye speake Ittalian, sinyor?'[50] The Lingua Franca drew its vocabulary from these and from the other languages spoken in the region, including Greek, Arabic, and Ottoman Turkish.[51] The language was simple in structure and vocabulary, and likely varied depending on the speaker and their origins.[52] As such, it proved relatively simple for many captives to grasp a basic knowledge of the language, to express themselves and to understand what was said to them. Crucially, though, this was a language whose life was almost entirely oral: besides its appearance in texts like captivity narratives – and snatches of it in literary works by Molière, Carlo Goldoni, and others – this was a language which was spoken rather than written.[53] As Karla Mallette writes, 'No one ever wrote a text in the *lingua franca.* It appears in writing only as the record of an overheard conversation, and

[48] Meyerstein, *Adventures by Sea of Edward Coxere*, 64; British Library, Sloane MS. 90. 'John Whitehead his relation of Barbary', fo. 8r; William Okeley, *Eben-ezer: or, a small monument of great mercy, appearing in the miraculous deliverance of William Okeley, John Anthony, Williams Adams, John Jephs, John Carpenter, from the miserable slavery of Algiers* (London, 1684), 5. The Lingua Franca was compared to both Italian and Spanish by those who heard it; it is likely that people heard echoes of languages they were already familiar with in the Lingua Franca, while it likely varied significantly depending on who was speaking it, their location, and their own linguistic background.

[49] British Library, Sloane MS. 90. 'John Whitehead his relation of Barbary', fo. 8r. Another traveller suggests the confusion that could emerge from an encounter with spoken Lingua Franca, describing being spoken to in Morocco in 'French, or mixed Spanish': Simon Ockley (ed.), *An Account of South-west Barbary: Containing What is Most Remarkable in the Territories of the King of Fez and Morocco. Written by a Person who had been a Slave There a considerable Time; and Published from his Authentick Manuscript* (London, 1713), 67.

[50] Bent, *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant*, 36.

[51] Nolan, 'Lingua Franca', 108.

[52] Joseph Cremona describes the Lingua Franca as 'essentially a spoken pidgin, with a grammatical apparatus reduced to an absolute minimum': Joseph Cremona, '"Accioché ognuno le possa intendere": The use of Italian as a lingua franca on the Barbary Coast of the seventeenth century. Evidence from the English', *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies*, 5 (1997), 53. It would be interesting to consider whether learning Lingua Franca was a very different experience for native English-speakers by contrast with speakers of the Romance languages to which it was more similar.

[53] For the literary uses of Lingua Franca, see George Lang, 'The literary settings of Lingua Franca (1300–1830)', *Neophilologus*, 76 (1992), 64–76. Probably the most famous (albeit fictional) English speaker of Lingua Franca was Lemuel Gulliver: on his first encounter with the Lilliputians, Gulliver 'spoke to them in as many languages as I had the least smattering of, which were High and Low Dutch, Latin, French, Spanish, Italian, and Lingua Franca, but all to no purpose': Jonathan Swift, *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World. In Four Parts. By Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, and Then a Captain of Several Ships* (London, 1726), Vol. I, 30.

almost always in the voice of another speaker'.[54] Its speakers in this period had no dictionaries or grammars to draw on in learning it: it was learnt through conversation and experience.[55] The Lingua Franca remained a pidgin language rather than a creole, meaning that it was never any speaker's native language, and thus did not become 'creolised', a complete language with a community of native speakers. Natalie Zemon Davis argues that creole languages 'illustrate the ingenuity of human populations in difficult straits and the wide range of situations and subjects they wanted to be able to talk about in relatively short order', which is also the case with a pidgin like the Lingua Franca.[56] Nobody's first language, it grew out of the contacts that made the early modern Mediterranean: by focusing in on the environments, the people, and the practices involved in teaching and learning it, we come closer to understanding experiences of cultural and confessional encounter and communication. It remains frustratingly difficult to access the Lingua Franca as it was spoken by those who learnt it: captivity narratives are a rare, if problematic, source for this pidgin language in use.

How, and where, was the Lingua Franca learnt by captives? Authors of captivity narratives often give the site of their first encounter with the Lingua Franca as occurring onboard the galley that had captured them. Paul Rycaut, the English diplomat and author of *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1666), wrote of galley captains that 'these are all for the most part Italian Renegadoes, or the race of them born and educated neer the Arsenal. The Officers command their *Chiurme* or slaves in corrupted Italian, which they call *Franke*'.[57] To understand one's commanders and fellow captives, it was often necessary to learn some of their shared language. William Okeley, who was a captive in Algiers between 1639 and 1644, was put to work on board the galley that had captured him, which continued to comb the Mediterranean in the weeks following his capture. In that time, he was lucky to find himself alongside fellow-Englishmen who had longer experience of captivity. During Okeley's time at sea, he reported that

> we found many Englishmen in their Ships, Slaves, like our selves, from whom we had no other Comfort, but the Condoling of each others Miseries, and that from them we learnt a smattering of the Common Language, which would be

[54] Mallette, 'Lingua Franca', 334.

[55] The first surviving systematic account of the Lingua Franca to have been printed was the *Dictionnaire de la Langue Franque ou Petit Mauresque... à l'usage des Français en Afrique* (Marseille, 1830).

[56] Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Creole languages and their uses: the example of colonial Suriname', *Historical Research*, 82 (2009), 268. Needless to say, the circumstances of Mediterranean captivity (and the ideas that underpinned it) were very different to those of the Atlantic slave trade.

[57] Paul Rycaut, *The present state of the Ottoman Empire. Containing the maxims of the Turkish politie, the most material Points of the Mahometan religion... etc.* (London, 1668), 215. On language and communication onboard the galleys, see Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 80–1.

of some use to us when we should come to Algiers, whither, after five or six Weeks we were brought.[58]

This passing reference is all that Okeley offers to indicate the manner in which he began to learn the 'common language', meaning the Lingua Franca. It was learnt early, in preparation for a situation in which it would become vital. It was learnt through a kind of solidarity between captives, and particularly between captives of Okeley's own nationality. And it was learnt in the galley, which in Okeley's account is revealed as a site of oral language-learning and knowledge exchange.[59] In the accounts of a captive like Okeley and a sailor like Coxere, the ship became a space in which languages were learnt in dialogue with fellow-seafarers and fellow-captives.

The *bagni* (baths), or captive quarters in North African cities, were polyglot spaces, where Lingua Franca was used to communicate between captives and their controllers, 'otherwise it were impossible for them to command their slaves, for in our Bath, among five hundred and fifty slaves, there were two and twenty Languages spoken'.[60] D'Aranda's account of his early days and at work recalled the first morning in the bagno, being woken 'ere the Sun was up' by the guardian of the bagno, who cried '*Sursa cani, a baso canalli*, that is *Get up you Dogs, come down you scoundrels.* (this was the good morrow)'; the account edited by Simon Ockley in 1713 noted that captives in Meknes were woken in the mornings by 'the doleful Eccho of *Vamos a travacho, Cornutos*, that is, *Come out to Work, ye Cuckolds*'.[61] Edward Coxere, who was set to work in a shipyard in Tunis, recalled how he was often joined by an 'admiral', who 'delighted to talk with me as if he had a small kindness for me'. This man offered advice on the work as well as some linguistic tips: 'He fell to instructing of me in lingua franca [Lingofrank], telling me I must have a care of my things'.[62] Coxere told a story about how, towards the end of his time in captiv-

[58] Okeley, *Eben-ezer*, 5.

[59] A luckier early modern traveller, the Levant merchant Robert Bargrave, used his time aboard a ship as a language-learning opportunity: sailing from Majorca to Livorno, he noted that he and his companions '[spent] our time in great emulation for the obteining the Italian tongue', Michael G. Brennan, *The Travel Diary of Robert Bargrave, Levant Merchant (1647–1656)* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1999), 60. For another perspective on shipboard orality, see Richard Blakemore, 'Orality and Mutiny: Authority and Speech Among the Seafarers of Early Modern London', in Cohen and Twomey (eds.), *Spoken Word and Social Practice*, 253–79.

[60] D'Aranda, *The History of Algiers*, 14. On the bagno, see Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*, 98–9; Salvatore Bono, *I corsari barbareschi* (Turin: Edizioni Rai Radiotelevisione Italiana, 1964), 225–42.

[61] D'Aranda, *The History of Algiers*, 14; Ockley, *An Account of South-West Barbary*, 115. Ockley's Lingua Franca sounds very close to Spanish, though it's impossible to know why: it could be that he, the author of the original text, or the speaker knew that language, or it could be that it was in fact Spanish but understood by Ockley as Lingua Franca (in the same way that Coxere's shaky rendition of the supposedly Spanish-language report of Cromwell's death with which this article began could reflect a form of Lingua Franca). Ockley's own linguistic background is interesting: according to Gerald MacLean and Nabil Matar, he studied idiomatic Arabic by speaking with Muslim merchants at the London docks. Gerald MacLean and Nabil Matar, *Britain and the Islamic World, 1558–1713* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 21.

[62] Meyerstein, *Adventures by Sea of Edward Coxere*, 64.

ity, having heard that English ships had come to Tunis, he began to joke with his fellow-captives that their redemption might be at hand:

> I remember I was saying to my consorts in a frolic that it may be the skrevan would come to us and say '*Engleses, a lesta suas robas*', which is in English 'Englishmen, make ready your clothes', as much as to say we should be gone.[63]

By this point, Coxere was able to mimic the speech in Lingua Franca of the 'scrivan' (secretary) at his bagno, to comic effect – as well as enabling communication between captives and their masters, the Lingua Franca could also be used as a means of creating solidarity with fellow-captives, even those of one's own nation.

The fact that sites of work were also sites of language-learning meant that the conditions under which this language-learning occurred were often conditions of pain and suffering. Emanuel d'Aranda recorded that on his first day of work, he and his companion were set to turn a great wheel, to which work they set themselves as hard as they could, 'because the Guardian still cry'd out to us, *Forti, Forti,* and we thought it signify'd that we should turn as fast as we could'. In this case, however, d'Aranda and his fellow-slave were the victims of a misunderstanding, since 'in Lingua Franca...the word *Forti* signifies Gently'. Having failed to get across his command using the common language, the guard fell back on violence: 'having not obtain'd what he would have by crying out upon us, he came with a good cudgel, and taught us what was the signification of the word *forti*'.[64] D'Aranda suffered this punitive form of language instruction again when he was set to pound wheat in a mortar, recalling how '[w]hen the Wheat was pounded, it was put into bags, and by misfortune there fell a little of it on the ground, which the Guardian taking notice of, said to me, *Pilla esse cani,* that is, Take up that you Dog; but I not understanding by his Language what he meant by *Pilla,* he gave me three or four bangs with a Cudgel over the back'.[65] D'Aranda's competence in Lingua Franca was acquired partly through physical punishment; his misunderstandings of vocabulary resulting in beating. This was an embodied kind of learning, where physical confinement and pain were among the techniques used to inculcate competence. In a period of imperial expansion and the imposition of languages on other populations, these factors deserve our attention as part of the history of language-learning and multilingual communication. As for the psychological impact of such an education, Emanuel d'Aranda recounted an event that took place after his liberation, when a group of Moroccans

[63] *Ibid.*, 65–6.

[64] D'Aranda, *The History of Algiers*, 14.

[65] *Ibid.*, 15. Compare d'Aranda's experience with that of Antoine Quartier in Tripoli from 1660 onwards, who struggled with work on a building site and who found learning the Lingua Franca difficult: Gillian Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs: France and Slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 54–5.

mistreated and imprisoned him. His companion and fellow ex-captive, Renier Saldens, took violent revenge on one of d'Aranda's new captors:

> he said... *Pilla Basso*, that is in Lingua Franca, Lay him down on the ground, and let four hold his arms and leggs, that he may be cudgell'd over the back and buttocks: For Saldens had a cudgel ready in his hand; having learnt that kind of justice when he was with us at Algiers.[66]

Saldens turned the form of punishment he had known as a captive onto this would-be captor, even appropriating the language of the overseer as he did so.

It is difficult to read d'Aranda's account of his attack without thinking about the ways in which language-learning in the context of imprisonment and pain could engender and unleash its own traumas. Captives' tales about their acquisition and use of Lingua Franca may need to be taken with a pinch of salt, but they offer much to the historian of mobility and communication. They present language-learning as occurring in the galley, the bagno, and the site of work, and as an activity which was intimately tied to bodily effort and the threat or reality of physical punishment. They draw our attention to the extent to which language-learning could be an embodied process: in an era when corporal punishment in educational contexts was common, they might prompt historians to wonder about other experiences of language-learning which left their mark on the body. And they remind us that language-learning was more than an intellectual endeavour: it could be social and emotional too. The visceral experiences of these involuntary language-learners carry their own lessons for historians of early modern language and mobility more generally.

3. ENGLAND'S OTHER ARABISTS

When she was captured and brought to Morocco, the Flemish captive Maria ter Meetelen 'didn't speak the language at all'. Thanks to dogged efforts and official favour, she managed eventually to receive the aid of 'a *torseman*, i.e. a mistress of language, [who] was to come with me every day before the king as an interpreter since I knew not yet enough of the language'. This 'torseman' – or dragoman – was 'an Irish female renegade, who had turned Turk after many torments'.[67] This Irishwoman, sufficiently fluent in Arabic to act as an interpreter and possibly a teacher, had learnt a language which was freighted with meaning and sometimes with a sense of potential danger for Christian Europeans and Anglophones in the early modern period. It was also a subject

[66] D'Aranda, *The History of Algiers*, 62.

[67] Maria ter Meetelen, *Miraculous and Remarkable Events of Twelve Years Slavery, of a Woman, Called Maria ter Meetelen, Resident of Medemblik* (Hoorn, 1748), in Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives*, 85, 95.

of fascination: for at least a century beforehand, England had been witnessing a growing interest in the study of the Arabic language and its texts.[68] At Cambridge, a professorship in Arabic was founded in 1632, and the study of the language grew more common at both English universities during the seventeenth century. Books on the Arabic language found an audience in English print (even if they were mostly written in Latin), while an interest in Arabic texts prompted the emergence of a brisk trade in manuscripts.[69] As the Levant Company grew, so too did English contacts with the language: Simon Mills has charted the efforts of the Company's chaplains to engage with and to learn the language during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[70] Edward Pococke, of whom John Selden wrote that 'he himselfe made Arabb his mistresse', had studied Arabic in Aleppo, hiring teachers for speaking and writing and cultivating relationships with speakers of the language with whom he could practise; he went on to become the first professor of Arabic at Oxford.[71] Arabic was booming in early modern England.

But while interest in the language was growing amongst English scholars, clergymen, and merchants, there were other English Arabists who have received less attention.[72] While few captives' experiences of the language made it into print, it is clear that some acquired at least some competence in the language. Joseph Pitts, who learnt Arabic during his own captivity, recalled the story of 'an Irish renegado, who was taken very young, insomuch, that he had not only lost his Christian Religion, but his Native Language also'; Pitts communicated with him entirely through Arabic.[73] Francis Brooks, recalling in 1693 his own escape from slavery in Morocco, described how he was aided by '[a] Moor, one of the Natives of the Country, having Compassion on me, and seeing my sad Condition that I was kept daily in, which I cannot at large insert here, came to me, speaking his own Language, being Arabick, *knowing I could understand him*' (my italics).[74] In an account of John Russell's mission as consul in Morocco in 1727, Captain John Braithwaite described 'one Pilleau,

[68] Vivian Salmon, 'Arabists and Linguists in England in the 17th Century', in Vivian Salmon, *Language and Society in Early Modern England: Selected Essays, 1981–1994* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Rodopi, 1996), 195–211.

[69] On the growth of scholarly interest in Arabic and Arabic texts, see G. J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

[70] Simon Mills, 'Learning Arabic in the Overseas Factories: The Case of the English', in Jan Loop, Alastair Hamilton, and Charles Burnett (eds.), *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 272–93.

[71] Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome and Learning*, 70; Kenneth Parker (ed.), *Early Modern Tales of Orient: A Critical Anthology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 3–5.

[72] 'Arabists' is a term more usually used to refer to scholars of the language: I use it here advisedly, in order to disrupt any notion of a clear binary between scholarly language-learning and the oral, sociable kinds of Arabic learning described in captivity narratives.

[73] Pitts, *A True and Faithful Account*, 108.

[74] Francis Brooks, *Barbarian Cruelty. Being A True History of the Distressed Condition of the Christian Captives under the Tyranny of Mully Ishmael Emperor of Morocco, and King of Fez and Macqueness in Barbary… With a particular Relation of the Dangerous Escape of the Author, and Two English Men More from Thence, after a Miserable Slavery of Ten Years* (London, 1693), 86.

a young Fellow of a good Family in Cornwal, but now turned Moor': this man, having been captured when very young, now 'spoke the Arabick Language as well as the Moors; and having traversed this vast Country even to the Frontiers of Guinea, was capable of giving a very good Account of it'.[75] Braithwaite and Russell also met with the aid of '[an] English Boy, who always accompanied Mr. Russel to Court, and who spoke Arabick as naturally as the Moors', as well as one 'Renegado Carr', 'an Irishman, who turned Moor thirty odd years ago', whose aid was necessary 'to translate the King's Letter to the Emperor; as also to translate into Arabick the Demands Mr. Russel had to ask in the Name of his Britannick Majesty'.[76] Later, he would be sent for again 'to translate the additional Articles of Peace into Arabick': here was a captive who had become a fluent writer as well as a speaker of Arabic.[77] Women and men, adults and children, captives and renegades – at the same time as English scholars and clergy were developing new interests in Arabic, the nation's other Arabists encountered the language in very different circumstances.

The most revealing account of a captive learning Arabic in this period is found in Joseph Pitts's *True and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mohammetans ... With an Account of the Author's Being Taken Captive* (Exeter, 1704).[78] Pitts was an Exeter sailor who was taken captive and brought to Algiers in 1678: he wrote that while a captive, he had converted to Islam and performed the hajj, only returning to Europe in 1693.[79] While he is attentive to language in use, Pitts offered little explicit material on how he learnt the language himself. His account of 'The Pronunciation of Arabick' may reflect his own struggles with learning to speak: he wrote that the pronunciation was 'very difficult, for every letter must have its proper sound, some are gutturals, and some must be pronounced from the Roof of the Mouth, and sometimes the Mouth must be brought awry to pronounce the word aright'.[80] Alongside his competence in spoken Arabic, Pitts seems to have had some reading knowledge of the language: at one point during his time in Mecca he spotted a wall 'on which there is written something of Arabick, which I had not time to read'; later, he recalled '[taking] an Arabick Alcoran in my Hand to Read' in order to hide from some curious renegades the fact that he was on the run from Algiers (though, of course, the reading of the Quran could itself be an oral activity).[81] Pitts did comment on the literacy of its other speakers, writing that

[75] John Braithwaite, *The History of the Revolutions in the Empire of Morocco, Upon the Death of the Late Emperor Muley Ishmael* (London, 1729),192. Over a century earlier, Thomas Dallam was given a dragoman in Istanbul who 'was a Turke, but a Cornishe man borne': Bent, *Early voyages and travels in the Levant*, 79. On Russell, see Nabil Matar, *British captives from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1563–1760* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 147.

[76] Braithwaite, *The History of the Revolutions*, 229, 180

[77] *Ibid.*, 269.

[78] For a critical modern edition of Pitts's text with commentary, see Auchterlonie, *Encountering Islam*.

[79] On Pitts and the local, intellectual, and print contexts for his work, see Humberto Garcia, 'Turning Turk, turning heretic: Joseph Pitts of Exeter and the early Enlightenment, 1670–1740', in Gerald MacLean (ed.), *Britain and the Muslim World: Historical Perspectives* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 85–101.

[80] Pitts, *A True and Faithful Account*, 31.

[81] *Ibid.*, 90, 174.

'[t]hey are (for the greater part) illiterate, and yet value Reading at an high Rate; insomuch, that many to my knowledge have begun their *Elif, Be, Te,* i.e. as I may say, their A.B.C. when they have had grey hairs. And I have heard many say, *Ocue mok billei dem!* i.e. *Oh! that I could but read!* Lamenting much the squandring of their Youth'.[82] He recalled a fellow Englishman, one James Grey from Weymouth, who was 'very much inclin'd to turn Mohammetan'. When Grey did convert, he was 'look'd on as a Zealot', not least because '[h]e became very diligent in learning to read the Alcoran'.[83] Scholars were not the only English-speakers to closely study the Quran and the written Arabic language.

Even so, captives' engagement with Arabic was never wholly or even primarily textual. The sound of the language is central to Pitts's account: he offered an apology to 'the Learned Reader' before his account, asking that 'if the Arabick Words in any place be not rightly written, he will please to take notice, that I aim'd at the vulgar Sound of the Word and writ as near as I could to their way of speaking it'. 'And moreover,' he wrote, 'I can't pretend to a Perfection in the Arabian Language'.[84] Pitts's descriptions of cultural practices he encountered are enlivened by the linguistic detail he provides. He described the language and customs he observed at mealtimes – 'They usually eat quick, and having done, everyone returns Thanks, saying, *el ham do lilloh*; i.e. *Thanks be to God*'.[85] – and offered a vivid aural portrait of the streets of Cairo, where 'all day long is heard a great Noise caus'd by the Ass-drivers; who are continually crying either *Wuggick* or *Thorick*, or *Shemalick*, or *Yeamejenick*, i.e. Have a care of your Face, or Back, or Left-side or Right-side'.[86] Pitts's transcriptions of Arabic speech in English phonetics, even if they were imperfect, gave the impression of authenticity to his account, and allowed readers to imagine for themselves the sensory and oral experience of captivity and cultural encounter.[87] They also distinguished his writing from the more scholarly portrayals of the language: his transcriptions made a claim to representing the language as it was actually spoken as an everyday vernacular.

In the story of his time in captivity, Pitts described his own conversion to Islam, and one selling-point of his text was that it could claim to show the Muslim world from the perspective of one who had practised the Muslim religion. Pitts gave his readers a taste of formal and informal religious language in use. Recalling the cries of those at the shore as corsairs set off from Algiers into the Mediterranean, he wrote that 'The Guns being fired, they all take their Leave of their Friends, saying, *Allah smorla dick*, i.e. *I leave you with God.*

[82] *Ibid.*, 31.

[83] *Ibid.*, 158.

[84] *Ibid*, sig. [A4v].

[85] Pitts, *A True and Faithful Account*, 17.

[86] *Ibid.*, 70–1.

[87] For a comparable point about the use and pleasures of maritime language for an English readership, see Janet Sorensen, *Stranger Vernaculars: How Eighteenth-Century Slang, Cant, Provincial Languages, and Nautical Jargon Became English* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017), 246–54.

Their Friends usually return, *Allah Deumlik weara*, i.e. *God give you a good Prize*'.[88] He also offered his readers the opportunity to eavesdrop on Muslim worship. At one point, Pitts attempted to transcribe the *iqama*, or second call to prayer, as he had heard it in the mosque in Algiers:

> before the *Emaum* begins, they (i.e., the Clerks) stand up and speak out so loudly that all the Congregation may hear them, in a curious Tune, *Allah whyek barrik, allah whyek barrik, ashhaed wa la e la he il allah, ashhaed wa la e la he il allah, ashhaed wa Mohammet Raseul allah, ashhaed was Mohammet Raseul allah, hy alla sallah, hy alla sallah, hy alla fellah, hy al-fellah, wa ta coum ala sallah, wa ta coum ala sallah, allah whyek barrik, allah whyek barrik, la he la he ill allah*, &c. (Much the same words they use on the top of the Steeple, when they call 'em to Service. &c.)[89]

By neglecting to translate these words, Pitts enhanced the sense of alterity and difference of Islamic ritual. He described how, once people had washed before prayers, 'they wet both Hands again, and then hold up the Fore-finger of the Right-hand, saying *La e la he il allah, Mohammet raseul-allah*; or [*Lah il-lahi, illallah Muhammet Resul-allah*;] i.e. *There is but one God and Mohammet the Prophet, or Messenger of God*; and the holding up the Fore-finger when they express these words, is made to signify the Unity'.[90]

These last words took on immense significance for Pitts, as well as for other captives who found themselves living in Muslim societies. Pitts wrote that 'the great and fundamental Article of the Mohammetan Faith, which chiefly makes them Mussulmans or Believers, consists in these words, viz. *La he, la he, ill allah Mohammet, Rasaul allah*'. This snippet of Arabic could have a momentous impact, '[f]or the saying of these Words, be it but once in a Man's whole Life, all his Debaucheries and Sins (they say) shall be forgiven, and he shall assuredly get to Heaven, tho' for some time he may lie in Hell 'till his Sins are burnt away'.[91] Pitts was describing the *shahada*, the Muslim testimony of belief: he and other captives laid great stress on the power of these words as an indicator of an individual's conversion to Islam. In 1622, John Rawlins had written an account of captivity in Algiers which complained that 'many even for feare of torment, and death, make their tongues betray their hearts to a most fearefull wickednesse, and so are circumcised with new names, and brought to confesse a new religion'.[92] The author T.S. described the mosques of Algiers, 'into

[88] Pitts, *A True and Faithful Account*, 11.

[89] *Ibid.*, 38.

[90] *Ibid.*, 37.

[91] *Ibid.*, 49–50.

[92] John Rawlins, *The famous and wonderfull recoverie of a Ship of Bristoll, Called the Exchange, from the Turkish Pirates of Argier. With the unmatchable attempts and good successe of John Rawlins, Pilot in her, and other slaves; who in the end with the slaughter of about 40. of the Turkes and Moores, brought the Ship into Plimouth the 13. of February Last; with the Captaine a Renegado, and 5. Turkes more, besides the redemption of 24. men, and one boy, from Turkish slaverie* (London, 1622), sig. B2r.

which no Christian hath liberty to enter, unless he intends to Apostatize; for he must either burn or turn that enters the Place of their Prayer, that handles the *Alcoran* before Witnesses, or that repeats their *Illa Alla Mahumet*, &c'.[93] More than a century before Pitts's account was published, Richard Hakluyt had printed the story of a sailor named Richard Burges, the purser of the *Jesus*, a Levant Company vessel which put in at Tripoli. Burges and a companion were approached by the ruler and by an English convert to Islam to see if they would convert. Refusing, they claimed to have been forcibly circumcised (this may well be an exculpatory exaggeration), but even this would not induce Burges to change his faith:

> [they] would have had him speake the wordes that thereunto belonged, but he answered them stoutly that he would not: and although they had put on him the habite of a Turke, yet sayd he, A Christian I was borne, and so I will remaine, though you force me to doe other wise.[94]

A common thread in these descriptions was the power of saying the *shahada* to effect an individual's conversion. Pitts, likely embellishing the story in order to justify his decision to convert, described his conversion as occurring under duress, the result of force and threats by his master: having been beaten and tied up by his feet, he tried to hold out: 'hanging by the Feet, he urg'd me again to speak the Words; yet loath I was, and held him in suspence a while; and at length told him, that I could not speak the Words'. But having suffered further pain and further demands that he convert, and 'seeing his [the master's] Cruelty towards me insatiable, unless I did turn Mohammetan, through Terrour I did it, and spake the Words as usual, holding up the Forefinger of my Right-hand'.[95] Home in England and writing an account of his captivity for print, Pitts told a compelling story of how he became a Muslim at the intersection of gesture, language, coercion, and pain.

In the first English-language captivity narrative written by a woman, Elizabeth Marsh offered a story of an attempt to convert her by deception – and argued for the danger of the *shahada* and of speaking Arabic without an understanding of what it meant.[96] Marsh had been captured at sea on her way from Gibraltar to see her fiancé in England, and found herself sold into the household of Sidi Mohammed, the ruler of Morocco. Meeting him for the first time, she regretted her lack of language: 'I should have been happy, could I have

[93] T.S., *The adventures of (Mr T.S.) an English Merchant, Taken Prisoner by the Turks of Argiers, And carried into the Inland Countries of Africa... Written first by the Author, and fitted for the Publick View by A. Roberts* (London, 1670), 45.

[94] Thomas Sanders, 'The Voyage Made to Tripolis in Barbarie, in the Yeere 1583', in Richard Hakluyt, *The principal navigations, voiages, traffiques and discoveries of the English nation*, 3 vols. (London, 1598–1600), Vol. II, 189.

[95] Pitts, *A True and Faithful Account*, 140.

[96] On Marsh, see Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: a Woman in World History* (London: HarperCollins, 2007).

spoken Morisco, in acquainting him with the ill Treatment I had experienced on the Road'.[97] One woman in Sidi Mohammed's household, 'who shewed me the greatest Civilities' was in fact 'the Daughter of an Englishman, who became a Renegado, and had married a Moorish Woman'.[98] Marsh's willingness to trust this woman was misplaced. She spoke to Marsh 'in Morisco, and was seemingly fond of me; and, by her Gestures, I imagined she wanted me to learn their Language'. Hearing this new companion speak a phrase in Arabic and believing herself to be under instruction, Marsh turned to a French boy who was interpreting between the two and asked him what the woman had said. He replied '*Rien de Consequence*' – nothing of consequence – but she made the mistake of taking him at his word and repeating what had been said to her:

> concluding that what she said related only to common Conversation, and being desirous of obliging her in Trifles, I imprudently repeated some Words after her, but found, when too late, that I had renounced (though innocently), by saying, *There is but one God, and* Mahomet *is his Prophet*.[99]

The reaction in the seraglio was jubilant: Elizabeth Marsh had unwittingly apostatised and become a Muslim. She refused utterly to accede to this trickery, explaining to an English-speaking interpreter sent to persuade her to stay in the palace that she would rather die than accept a new faith.[100] Ultimately, her protestations resulted in her release, though she made sure to print the warning given to her by a friend after the experience: 'Let me intreat you never at any Rate, to repeat a Word in the Language of the Country, not even the most trifling'.[101] Elizabeth Marsh's account dramatised the dangers of linguistic encounter, and the risks the traveller faced by speaking in a language they did not understand. The act of learning and speaking in another language – particularly one so closely associated with Islam – was portrayed as having the potential to convert the speaker. From conversation to conversion, these self-translations were among the risks perceived by those who wrote about Arabic and Islam in early modern England.

4. CONCLUSION

The early modern Mediterranean was a place of contact, commerce, and communication between people of different national, ethnic, and religious origins. It was a polyglot sea, and one where members of these different groups had to work to understand one another. Eric Dursteler has argued that '[l]inguistic difference was a fundamental and familiar feature that did not

[97] Marsh in Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives*, 141.
[98] *Ibid.*, 142.
[99] *Ibid.*, 146.
[100] *Ibid.*, 147.
[101] *Ibid.*, 155.

necessarily function as a cultural barrier between the sea's multiplicity of peoples'.[102] While it is true that multilingual communication was an everyday feature of life in the early modern Mediterranean, and that modern notions of the monoglot nation-state break down in the face of the linguistic realities of the period, we should not allow ideas of unity and connectivity to blind us to the kinds of everyday work that underlay Mediterranean and other early modern multilingualisms. In this article, I have used captivity narratives' representation of linguistic encounters to think about the practices and processes of language-learning which created polyglot competences. Successful communication across language barriers relied on practices and processes which have yet to be fully explored by historians of language or mobility. By thinking about how linguistic competence was acquired – the aural, spatial, bodily, emotional contexts in which individuals learnt to speak to each other – it becomes possible to envisage a social history of multilingualism which can help us to better understand experiences of mobility and coexistence in the early modern world.

The captivity narratives discussed in this article offer unique accounts of how individuals learnt to communicate in new languages not of their choosing. They might also prove useful for historians of language-learning, multilingualism, and mobility more broadly. These histories have often, for understandable reasons, focused on the experiences of the literate. But literacy (of any kind) was not a precondition for multilingual competence, any more than it is today. Multilingualism was a fact of life for many early modern Europeans, both elite and not: linguistic difference and how to manage it were key issues. For those who travelled, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, these became inescapable questions. Captivity narratives' focus on pragmatic, oral, everyday language-learning might allow us to think about the language-learning practices of those who did not or could not access textual resources or formal linguistic education. The ship, the workshop, the streets all emerge as sites where speakers of different languages might be thrust together and ultimately learn from each other: these will be fruitful spaces to investigate if we are to write histories of language and mobility that do justice to the social range of early modern experiences. The extraordinary experience of Mediterranean captivity ensured the recording of an activity which may, as it turns out, have been very ordinary indeed.

University of Leeds

[102] Dursteler, 'Speaking in Tongues', 77.