

## Piracy, Captivity and Redemption in *Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez*

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**Abstract:** This article proposes that *Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez* (1690) uses the motifs of piracy and captivity as an instrument of piety and devotion. The text manipulates Counter-Reformation propaganda to have a moralizing effect as the society of its time, which tended to consider martyrdom as the best way to reach glory. Ramírez's captivity is an instrument of expiation for obtaining virtue, and hence, for attaining eternal salvation. His suffering serves to disprove the false beliefs of the captors. Therefore, in *Infortunios*, the same motifs appear as in other Counter-Reformation narratives of captivity written in the Early Modern Hispanic World.

**Keywords:** *Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez*; Gaspar de la Cerda; captivity; piracy; Counter-Reformation propaganda

**Resumo:** Este artigo propõe que *Los infortunios de Alonso Ramírez* (1690) usa os motivos da pirataria e do cativo como um instrumento de piedade e devoção. O texto manipula a propaganda contra-reformista para alcançar um efeito moralizante na sociedade de seu texto, a qual tendia a considerar o martírio como o melhor caminho para se alcançar a glória. O cativo de Ramírez é um instrumento de expiação para atingir a virtude e, então, alcançar a salvação eterna. Seu sofrimento serve para refutar as falsas crenças dos captores. Portanto, nos *Infortunios*, os mesmos motivos aparecem em outras narrativas de cativo da Contra Reforma escritas no início do mundo moderno hispânico.

**Palavras-chave:** *Los infortunios de Alonso Ramírez*; Gaspar de la Cerda; aurores malditos; América Latina

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## Introduction

From November 20, 1688, to February 26, 1696, Gaspar de la Cerda Sandoval Silva y Mendoza governed New Spain. He was the count of Galve, a gentleman of the royal bed-chamber, and knight of the *Orden de Alcántara*.<sup>1</sup> One of his first acts was to adopt measures for the extermination of pirates on the coast of Mexico, the Caribbean and the Philippines. When he assumed office, news reached the capital of the capture by pirates of Acaponeta, a small town on the coast of Nueva Galicia (Gutiérrez Lorenzo, 1993, pp. 75-87). Besides a quantity of silver, the enemy carried off many prisoners, including forty women and two friars. The viceroy dispatched an expedition to pursue them. He sent troops from Mexico City and a Peruvian frigate recently arrived at Acapulco to search for the enemy.<sup>2</sup> On May 8, pirates hovered off the coast, and a general council was held in the capital to debate further measures for their pursuit. Twelve days later it was ascertained that they had sailed for Peru, having released all their prisoners, except three men: one of them a Franciscan friar. Nevertheless, preparations continued; troops from the capital and a small fleet sailed in the middle of August from Acapulco to cruise along the coast. These expeditions continued until 1692. During this year, two vessels built in Guatemala by order of the viceroy anchored in the port of Acapulco (Cavo, 1836, p. 85-86). This information is easily obtainable because, like most of the viceroys, Gaspar de la Cerda used two traditional methods to propagate his ideas: official correspondence and written propaganda. In this article, I will focus on the second one: several texts written in Mexico from 1688 to 1696, namely during his term of office, extol his virtues and eulogize his name. Among the authors who published in support of Gaspar de la Cerda's administration, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora holds a unique role because he wrote *Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez*, the text I will examine on the following pages.<sup>3</sup> This account (*relación*) is one of the most remarkable texts about piracy written in New Spain. The Hispanic Society of America in New York has its *editio princeps*. It was published in 1690 by the *Imprenta de los herederos de la viuda de Calderón*.<sup>4</sup> Its content centers on the misfortunes of a poor lower-class *criollo*: the Puerto Rican Alonso Ramírez who was hijacked by British pirates in the Philippines and narrates his version of the story. *Infortunios* is written in the first person. It relates Ramírez's day-to-day experiences since he left his native land until he received the protection of the viceroy after being found along the coast of Yucatán under suspicious circumstances that indicated a possible connection with illegal trade. A significant portion of the text focuses on the painful sufferings he experienced during his captivity. The book is divided into seven chapters with their respective themes and subthemes,<sup>5</sup> including hunger, poverty, an

<sup>1</sup> The monastic militia of Alcántara seemed to originate from a small *hermangilda* operating in the kingdom of León about 1170. Its origin could also have been a Cistercian community founded at San Julian del Pereiro in Portugal. The king of León, Alfonso X, gave the fortress of Alcántara to the brotherhood, which was formally recognized by Pope Lucius III in 1183. Such a small body seemed to have needed support from a powerful organization to survive, and soon Alcántara eventually became little more than a minor branch of Calatrava, and it was thus under the secular authority of the king of Castile. Like the other Spanish orders, Alcántara became a national honorific order taken over by the Spanish crown after 1494 (Lepage, 2015, p. 188.)

<sup>2</sup> The capture of Acaponeta occurred on November 14. Notwithstanding this prompt action, however, nothing was accomplished, the frigate returned to Acapulco about the middle of February without even having sighted the enemy (Bancroft, 1888, p. 222.)

<sup>3</sup> I will not allude to the questions related to *Infortunios*'s authorship. For more information about this issue, read the work of Leonor Taiano entitled *Entre mecenazgo y piratería: Una recontextualización histórica de Infotunios de Alonso Ramírez* (Taiano, 2013, p. 168-193.)

<sup>4</sup> This is a legal edition because it has de "Suma de licencias" [licenses] but lacks "privilegio", "suma de tasa", "fe de erratas" [erratum] and "colofón" [colophon].

<sup>5</sup> The titles of these chapters are Chapter 1: Motives which induced Alonso Ramírez to leave his native land. Occupation and voyages in New Spain. His stay in Mexico until his travels from there to the Philippine Islands. Chapter 2: He leaves Acapulco for the Philippines; the route normally taken is laid out and a

itinerant existence, social determinism, piracy and captivity. In this essay, I propose that *Infortunios* uses the motifs of piracy and captivity as an instrument of piety and devotion. The text manipulates the Counter-Reformation propaganda to have a moralizing effect. Therefore, this *relación* is written for the society of its time, which tended to consider martyrdom as the best way to reach glory. The author of *Infortunios* wishes to demonstrate that the narrator-protagonist is a virtuous individual. His captivity was an instrument of expiation for achieving greater virtue, and hence, for attaining eternal salvation. His suffering serves to disprove the false beliefs of the captors. Therefore, in *Infortunios* the same motifs appears as in other narratives of captivity.<sup>6</sup> This article will be divided into five parts. The first one studies the role of Gaspar de la Cerda's practice of Charity in *Infortunios*. The second one focuses on the representation of the enemy. The third one studies the role of the renegades and apostates in the accounts of captivity to define the specific role of the Sevillian Miguel in this *relación*. The fourth part analyzes how *Infortunios* depicts Crypto-Catholic pirates. Finally, the fifth part studies the role of corrupted officials and terrestrial redeemers. I will try to find an answer to the following questions: What virtues make Gaspar de la Cerda a virtuous ruler in *Infortunios*? How does this text depict the enemy? Who is considered a traitor in this book? Does Crypto-Catholicism have a function in *Infortunios*? What is the role of corrupted officials? Who are Ramírez's redeemers? How does Alonso Ramírez describe himself? What is the role of Marian's devotion?

### Gaspar de la Cerda's Practice of Charity and the Struggle for Justice

On first reading, Alonso Ramírez appears to be the absolute protagonist while Gaspar de la Cerda does not appear to be central. However, a close and careful examination of this *relación* reveals that the viceroy plays a fundamental role in the text: he is described as an enlightened viceroy whose Greco-Roman and Christian values ensure the welfare of the viceroyalty.<sup>7</sup> Although his name appears only in the dedication and in the final lines of the seventh chapter, he is depicted as a living example of *pietas* and *aequitas*, which he, according to the text, inherited from his ancestors. These virtues are at the basis of his government's *iustitia*:

It was in Mexico that Alonso Ramirez closed the cycle of his hardships, which amounted, in the course of being captured by English pirates in the Philippines and then stranded on the shores of Yucatan, to a circumnavigation of the globe. And given how Your Excellency pitied the sufferer of these tribulations when he related them to You, no one

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description is given of what he did with his time until his capture by the English. Chapter 3: Wherein are listed the pirates' robberies and cruelties on the high seas and on land until they reached America. Chapter 4: He is given his freedom by the pirates and remembers his sufferings while imprisoned. Chapter 5: Alonso Ramirez and his companions sail with no clear knowledge of their initial location or of their ultimate destination; their struggles and anxieties until the moment their boat ran aground are described. Chapter 6: The trials of thirst, hunger, illness, and death that hounded them on this coast; unexpectedly they come upon Catholic people and come to realize that they are on mainland Yucatan in North America. Chapter 7: They travel to Tejosuco and from there to Valladolid, where they experience trouble; they reach Merida, but Alonso Ramirez returns to Valladolid, where the troubles increase; the reason he came to Mexico and what resulted from his trip there.

<sup>6</sup> However, it is interesting the fact that Ramírez's negative descriptions of the British correspond to a period of peace between Spain and England. His subjugation and suffering indicate that the British overseas expansion is a risk for all the nations, including its Spanish ally (López Lázaro, 2007, p. 87-104.)

<sup>7</sup> This was common in the viceregal propaganda. Antonio de Mendoza, for example, was presented as the "padre para los pobres", namely "father of the poor" (Trueba, 1962, p. 41), Luis de Velasco was called by the indigenous the "padre del país", that is to say, "father of the country" and "el libertador", scilicet "the liberator" (Sarabia Viejo, 1978, p. 10).

could doubt that Your munificence will continue to favour him in the future except one who refuses to acknowledge how Your Excellency, in tempering commiseration with grandeur, reconciles them so reciprocally that they are matched equally. The combination is so perfect that I can say that no mind, no matter how perspicacious or lynx-like, will be able to discern which comes first in Your Excellency, the greatness inherited from Your most excellent ancestors or the native-born pious pity of Your compassion, which never denies succor to the pitiful tears of those toiling under the injury of their misfortune. Encouraged by the real proof of these qualities which I daily witness in Your presence, and trusting that Your Excellency's Palace doors are never closed to the destitute men whose narrative you entrusted me to write, I offer up on the altar of Your Excellency's beneficence this lamentable pilgrimage, confident, for my part, that it will garner both patronage and esteem from Your Excellency's astounding judgment in hydrographic and geographical matters. (Sigüenza y Góngora, 2011, p. 101-102)

The protection that Gaspar de la Cerda provided to Alonso Ramírez demonstrates his benignity: He favorably resolved the unjust lawsuit against a defenseless man. The text should be read as a sort of propaganda that boasts his *auctoritas* by embracing philanthropic values. The fact that Alonso Ramírez obtained financial benefit from the treasury offices (*Cajas Reales*) and, in addition, was admitted to the *Armada de Barlovento* could be interpreted as a legal application of the Christian principle of *obsequium pauperum* or assistance to those in need. The protection granted to the Puerto Rican was not the product of the shortcomings of the justice system and general corruption of New Spain. He issued a sentence based on a *benignior interpretatio* because he recognized Ramírez as someone who became easy prey to unscrupulous people and an innocent victim of circumstances:

The latter [Sigüenza y Góngora] [...] convinced His Excellency the Viceroy to issue three decrees: that I will be provided financial assistance by Don Sebastian de Guzman y Cordova, the Royal Treasuries' Bursar and Chief Financial and Accounting Officer, which command this official diligently carried out; that I will be assigned temporarily to the Windward Fleet until I settle on a more permanent post; and an order to the Governor of Yucatan commanding that he ensure that whatever the officials had embargoed or secured of my ship's property, whether found on the beach or lying in the wreck's hold, be turned over entirely to myself or any agent of mine without delay, pretext, or rejoinders. (Sigüenza y Góngora, 2011, p. 150)

Using the idealized Gaspar de la Cerda, *Infortunios* addresses the qualities of a good ruler. This viceroy protects Novohispanic individuals from external enemies, knows his duties of administration, and promotes the Catholic mission. The ideals of the good ruler depicted in Gaspar de la Cerda are tailored to the specific case of Ramírez. The book portrays the viceroy as someone who is safeguarding the true faith, protecting destitute people, and combating heresy and corruption. Simultaneously, throughout the text, Alonso Ramírez evokes dramatic moments in which he tells about life-threatening tortures, which are invoked as evidence of his innocence. The Puerto Rican is represented as someone who, despite his adverse destiny, provides support to his companions of misfortune. Ramírez's behavior, like other protagonists of other accounts of captivity, shows that despite the obstacles, he imparts spiritual support to his companions in misfortune.<sup>8</sup> The

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<sup>8</sup>Gracián notes that he fulfilled the seven corporal and spiritual works of mercy because he states that he instructed the captives, provided pastoral counseling, comforted the sorrowing, forgave the renegades,

Puerto Rican provides examples of his generosity and mercy. Among these, two cases that stand out are the one in which the Puerto Rican gives the two Sangleyes a Christian burial and the episode in which he, even though he is very tired, does not stop on Isla Guadalupe to protect his men from being enslaved due to the color of their skin:

My companions, however, were greatly opposed to my reasoning and rejected it vehemently and, addressing themselves to the color of their skin and the fact that they were not Spaniards, argued that they would be made slaves upon the instant and pledged it would pain them less to be sent headlong into the ocean by my hands than to place themselves into those of foreigners and endure their mistreatment.

So as not to plunge them further into grief, feeling less my own disconsolate state of mind than theirs, I steered away northward all day and on the following bore off north-northeast, at the end of which course in three days' time I sighted an island. (Sigüenza y Góngora, 2011, p. 132)

### The Image of the Enemies

In keeping with the above, two different categories of antagonists generated Ramírez's misfortunes. The first group comprises the British pirates or external enemies who had a detrimental effect on Ramírez and the Spanish monarchy. The second one is constituted by corrupt public officials who denied Ramírez's rights by threatening his freedom, honor, and property. Regarding the British, clearly *Infortunios* followed the trends of other books patronized by Gaspar de la Cerda, which depicted foreigners as enemies. Pirates are described according to the Ciceronian's point of view: they are considered *communis hostis omnium* and embody the paradigm of the illegal, cruel and soulless universal adversaries who attack the settlers of the coasts around the world (Taiano, 2013, p. 162). Additionally, the account dovetails with the Counter-Reformation patterns<sup>9</sup>: the British are the symbol of a country that became an enemy of the Pope and there is no way to reconcile with them. Even though they are part of the ally countries during the Nine Years' war (López Lázaro, 2007, p. 87-104), they will always dislike Catholics and, therefore, it is always difficult to have to deal with them. Alonso Ramírez openly accuses them of persistent anti-Catholic bigotry, which constitutes an acceptable prejudice in England that led to an anti-Spanish sentiment, as we can see in these paragraphs in which the pirates consider that Spaniards and cowards are synonymous:

I had a great fear of being shot. Thereupon they began to jeer at my being a Spanish coward and chicken and not worthy of being part of their company, which would honor and raise me to too high a level, and so gave up on importuning me any longer. (SIGÜENZA Y GÓNGORA, 2011, p. 118)

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suffered his captivity with infinite patience, etc. He prides himself on having reconverted several renegades to Catholicism. At the same time, he states that he tried to advocate for them (he sent letters to the Inquisition, attempted to rescue them, performed the mass, and acted as a preacher, confessor and spiritual assistant, etc.) (Gracián, 2006, p. 30)

<sup>9</sup> It was a phase of Spanish patriotism and presumed hostility to the English heretics. It presumed also that those who felt in conflict with the English, whatever may have been the real origin of the combat, fell in a holy cause (Taiano, 2013, p. 194)

In *Infortunios*, we find all the prejudices and stereotypes during the religious wars that generally accompany all forms of xenophobia based on ideas of ethnic, religious and cultural superiority and reciprocal resentment. In the text, we can perceive that the relationship between the Spaniards and the British is affected by tension and mutual contempt. From Alonso Ramírez's point of view, individuals are primarily ranked based on grounds of their nationality and religion. Concerning this point, Norma Hernández de Ross noted that *Infortunios* follows a hierarchical and pyramid-shaped configuration that places Catholic countries within the top ranks (Spanish, Portuguese and French people) while the lower ranks are occupied by those belonging to Protestant countries (Netherlands and England) (Hernández de Ross, 1993, p. 53). Nina Gerassi-Navarro, for her part, underlines that at the bottom of the hierarchy are the British who lack moral values and seem determined to inflict harm on all the Spaniards they encounter (Gerassi-Navarro, 1999, p. 64). According to Assima Saad, the cruel depiction of the British shows how the mistrust regarding the Muslims from the Mediterranean shifted to the Protestants making their mark on the oceans (Saad, 2005, p. 9-17). Similarly, Carmen de Mora considers that *Infortunios* present specific features that bring the text closer to the autobiographical accounts of captivity written during the Early Modern period (Mora, 2001, p. 341). This *relación* relates the sequence of events that show that Ramírez —directly or indirectly— withstood all kinds of tortures without detracting from his nation and his faith. From the second chapter on, Ramírez's traumatic experiences with the pirates shape *Infortunios*. The Puerto Rican describes incidents involving psychological and physical torture and ill-treatment of those who —like him—were deprived of their liberty. This manifests in the episode in which the Puerto Rican relates the humiliations suffered by the Sangley<sup>10</sup> Francisco de la Cruz, which matches with the content appearing in several accounts of captivity, in which the first-person narrator indicates repeatedly that his companions of misfortune suffered corporal and psychological maltreatment and public punishments. Witnessing the victimization of other captives caused significant distress in the narrator:

they grabbed hold of Francisco de la Cruz, another of my companions, who was a Sangley mestizo, and with unceasingly cruel flogging laid him out unconscious and almost lifeless on the ship's waist. The rest of us were put into the hold, from whence I then heard bloodcurdling cries followed by a blunderbuss shot. A little while later they brought me back up and showed me all the blood that had been spilt, explaining that it came from one of my men whom they had just killed; they warned me that I should expect the same treatment if I did not satisfy all of their questions. (Sigüenza y Góngora, 2011, p. 116)

His testimony emphasizes that the pirates' demonstrations of violence made the captives feel inferior. He and his companions were literally and figuratively prisoners to any form of subjugation that included pain, anxiety and the feeling of impending doom. Ramírez introduces himself as an eyewitness who has seen horrendous scenes of violence that include rape, murder, arson and large-scale damage to property and a gross violation of the natural law. This is particularly noticeable in the episode related to the people of Pulo Condore:

The stay of four months was thus made tolerable for our captors with such a repulsive convenience; however, life for them was not worth living unless they were thieving. So, once their ships were ready, they

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<sup>10</sup> Sangley is a term to define a person of Chinese ancestry living in the Philippines during the Spanish Colonial period. Sangley means "merchant traveler" or "frequent visitor." (Crewe, 2015, p. 337-365.)

loaded up all the supplies needed to set sail from the island. But before setting out, they first made counsel to decide on a suitable payment to the Pulicondones for their hospitality; and, setting the payment thereof for the day they headed out to sea, they attacked them in the morning as they lay asleep, unsuspecting, and slit the throats of the very women they had made pregnant. Then they set fire to most of the town and came on board, with flags waving, greatly rejoicing. I was not present at such notorious acts of cruelty, for I was kept always on their flagship, but I feared that I might eventually suffer the same fate as I heard the shots of muskets and witnessed the fires. (Sigüenza y Góngora, 2011, p. 117-118)

Ramírez condemns all forms of brutality, including physical abuse, sexual violence and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, represented by scenes of coprophagy, anthropophagy, etcetera. The Puerto Rican openly exposes his deep psychological trauma and describes images of physical and mental torture that offer clear evidence of his progressive degradation because he has been subjected to strong pressure of many different types (Levisi, 198, p. 54). His total fragility can be perceived in the episode in which all the captives whipped each other in front of the English who enjoyed contemplating them:

we feared Monday the most because it was then that they would make a circle of reeds around the mizzenmast, tying our left hands to it, placing in our right hands short whips, and removing our clothing, after which they would place their daggers and pistols on our chests and force us to lash each other. Throughout this torture, the humiliation and agony we felt doing this was matched stroke by stroke by the applause and rejoicing with which they celebrated it. (Sigüenza y Góngora, 2011, p. 128)

José Buscaglia defines this episode as a symbol of the sexual violence against no Europeans without differentiating their ethnic social group or place of birth: indigenous, Africans, Sangleyes, *criollos*, free men and slaves flagellated each other to offer diversion to their European captors. Even though his perspective might seem speculation, it is possible that Ramírez and his companions of misfortune have become instruments of their captors' sadism because it appears that *Infortunios* attributes to the Protestants the same tendencies attributed to Muslim pirates. The text suggests that the British pirates followed the rules of *matelotage*, which probably included sexual servility (Burg, 1995, p. 128-130). It is important to remember that physical punishment, humiliation, and sexual abuse are typical motifs of the books of captivity. Diego Galán relates the sad episode of a renegade from Granada, known in Argel as Mustafá, who failed in his attempt to escape and was punished by his captors: they ordered another captive, a French surgeon, to castrate the Grenadian:

The Pasha said: —call the barber— who was a captive French surgeon. He went to the stern and said: Take the tools and cut his privates as a punishment for what he did. The surgeon obeyed [...] and said [to Mustafá]: I come to do the will of the bajá [...] and then, he nipped it in the bud [...] <sup>11</sup>. (Galán, 2001, p. 68-69)

While it is true that the two scenes are not the same, they share the fact that the annoyance affects the bodily integrity of the prisoners and pain is caused by a person who

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<sup>11</sup> Dijo el bajá: —llamen al barbero— quien era un cirujano cautivo francés [...] fue a la popa y dijo: Tomad la herramienta y cortad a Mustafá sus partes en castigo del delito que hizo. El cirujano obedeció [...] y le dijo [a Mustafá]: yo vengo a hacer lo que manda el bajá [...] y luego le cortó todo de raíz [...] (Galán, 2001, p. 68-69). The English translation is mine.

is also subjected to a foreign non-Catholic captor. In addition, if we go back to the question of sexual submission proposed by Buscaglia, George Camanis mentions that the captors' sexual perversion is a common feature of the books addressing the issue of captivity.<sup>12</sup> Diego de Haedo, for example, states that there are no brothels in the North African cities because Muslims were *bujarrones* (homosexuals) and preferred to have sexual intercourse with masculine Christian captives (Haedo, 1927, p. 12). Gerónimo Gracián maintains that these same-sex relationships did not always occur through force or coercion, because many Christian men were accomplices to their captors. Therefore, Gracián considers that it is important to support the redemption of captives because the sense of hopelessness has led many Christians to succumb to the temptation, especially the “heinous sins” (*pecados nefandos*) of sodomy and conversion to Islam (Gracián, 2006, p. 32-39). *Infortunios* transfers to the British pirates the traits attributed to Muslims. The text matches the motif of the victimhood of a Catholic-Hispanic individual due to the perversion of a foreign pirate who belongs to a different religion. This characteristic of the text allows me to state that—even though *Infortunios* does not take place in the Mediterranean—it corresponds with the accounts of captivity. The text explains the reasons behind the pirate's wickedness using the association “non-Catholic=enemy” and “foreigner=perversion” and therefore the medieval idea of crusade becomes also a sort of “rejection of Protestant heresy” in *Infortunios*.

### Renegades and apostates: The image par excellence of the traitors

Another motif that *Infortunios* shares with the accounts of captivity is the narrator clearly suggests many captives opted to cooperate with their oppressors. The best way to perform this collaboration—in this epoch profoundly marked by the wars of religion—was to recant Catholicism and endorse Islam or Protestantism. Various authors mention the role played by Catholic renegades in the Muslim world (among them, we can include the already mentioned Diego de Haedo and Jerónimo de Pasamonte). They define renegades and apostates as traitors to their nation, culture and religion. In addition, they assert that poverty, ignorance, and the burning desire to succeed influenced abjuration (Gracián, 2006, p. 44-45). These authors state that Christian renegades were ready to undertake an intermediary role in the interests of their captors.<sup>13</sup> They are part of what Maximiliano Barrio Gózalo defined as the Golden Age of renegades (Barrio Gózalo, 2004, p. 13-49).<sup>14</sup> While many renegades have been subjected to captivity, several departed their country voluntarily to Berberia to embrace Islam because they were social outcasts in their

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<sup>12</sup> Concerning nonfiction texts, several authors address the issue of the sodomy between Muslim captors and Christian captives. Regarding fiction texts, Camanis highlights the fact that Cervantes expresses concern about the fact that many Christian men were victims of the Muslim perversion. This can be seen in this excerpt of *Don Quixote*: “he was told that one of the most gallant and handsome young men imaginable had accompanied me. I realized immediately that they were speaking of Don Gaspar Gregorio, whose beauty far surpasses any other, no matter how praiseworthy. I was troubled when I considered the danger to him, because among those barbarous Turks a handsome boy or youth is more highly esteemed than a woman [...] I spoke to Don Gaspar, I told him of the danger he was in if he appeared as a man, I dressed him as a Moorish girl, and that same afternoon I brought him before the king, who, when he saw him, was stunned, and decided to keep her and make a present of her to his great lord; to avoid the danger she might face in his seraglio, and fearing what he himself might do, he ordered her placed in the home of some wellborn Moorish women who would protect and serve her. Don Gaspar was taken there at once” (Cervantes, 1996, p. 688).

<sup>13</sup> For example, *Cautiverio y trabajos* by Diego Galán (1612-1621) explicitly refers to the renegades' role in Muslim lands. In his text, there are some newcomers who—like the castrated Mustafá—are segregated for being recently converted, but there are others who have achieved a social promotion. Some of them had succeeded in buying ships or even became trusted men of the pasha.

<sup>14</sup> Cığalazade Yusuf Sinan Pasha (known in the Western world as Cicala or Cigala) and Kilidj Ali Pasha (known as Occhiali or Uchalí) are among the most famous of them.



homeland.<sup>15</sup> On the one hand, many Europeans abjured Christianity and the Inquisition judged them renegades or apostates. On the other hand, piracy developed by Protestant countries led many Catholics from the Mediterranean and overseas territories to change their religion. Thus, they were considered heretics because of their new religion, which accepted the messianic figure of Jesus but challenged the dogmas of Catholicism.<sup>16</sup> In *Infortunios*, Ramírez accuses the Sevillian Miguel of collaborating with the British and having converted to Protestantism. He shows his total abhorrence of this peninsular apostate who broke with Catholicism and with Spain. Therefore, with this character, Ramírez shows that a contributing factor to piracy was the Spanish collaborators.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, Miguel is one of Ramírez's oppressors, he represents the internal enemy:

I suspect that the evil of their manner in treating us was increased by the presence of a Spaniard in their company, a native of Seville whose name was Miguel. No intolerable task given to us, no occasion for mistreatment or hunger enforced on us, no danger to life sent our way ever came without his having had a hand in planning and executing it. He gloried in how these acts boldly pronounced to the world his godlessness, his abandonment of his native Catholic faith, and his commitment to living as a pirate and dying as a heretic. It pained me most—and my company as well—when he would join the Englishmen in praying and reading from their books on their feast days, which were every Sunday in the calendar and Christmas. May God grant him the enlightenment he needs to correct his life and merit the Lord's forgiveness for all the iniquities of his actions. (Sigüenza y Góngora, 2011, p. 129-130)

Aníbal González sees the difference in behavior between Miguel and Alonso Ramírez as proof of the existence of a creolist ideology (*criollismo*) in *Infortunios*. While it is clear that Ramírez is trying to make a distinction between himself (the loyal subject) and Miguel (the traitor), I do not consider that *Infortunios* is explicitly expressing creolist ideas, but he promotes his own image as a good citizen by discrediting a person who was not present in New Spain. Therefore, he could not be judged by the Novohispanic authorities. Miguel is not an isolated case. Several *Peninsulares*, *Criollos*, runaway slaves, indigenous persons and Asians collaborated with pirates.<sup>18</sup> In addition, it is important to consider that this kind of malevolence towards apostates was common in the accounts of captivity and could be considered a rhetorical device to enhance the narrator's reputation. Diego Galán, for instance, condemned those who adhered to the *secta de Mahoma* (the sect of Mohammed) (Galán, 2001, p. 89). Ramírez's rejection of Miguel may be an instrument to avoid the initiation of an inquisitorial proceeding against himself.

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<sup>15</sup> Several cases of abjuration were studied by Bartolomé and Lucile Bennassar in their book, *Les Christians d'Allah*. The Islamic societies, in their opinion, appeared to be meritocratic in comparison with Christian class-based societies. As a result, several captives turned to Islam to achieve success quickly. Additionally, others practiced a craft that was considered useful or had sexual relations with a superior to achieve material progress (Bennassar and Bennassar, 1989, p. 19)

<sup>16</sup> One of the most renowned apostates is Nuño da Silva, whose fate is to be envied. He was a Portuguese pilot captured by Francis Drake on the Cape Verde Islands on 30 January 1578 and abandoned by him at Guatulco on 13 April 1579. His services were invaluable to Drake, and he was accused —by other captives— of converting to Protestantism but he obtained the royal pardon and protection from Phillip II of Spain. (AGI, Patronato, 266, R.7)

<sup>17</sup> In this sense, *Infortunios* could be associated with the content of several Inquisitorial proceedings from Sicily, Naples, Madrid, Seville and Mallorca, which show that several ex-captives presented themselves as escaped prisoners to hide that they were renegades and had collaborated with their captors as informants (Bennassar; Bennassar, 1989, p. 185).

<sup>18</sup> Among them, we can mention Sevillian Diego Pérez, who helped Jacques de Soré; Juan Martínez de Cádiz, who showed the route to the Indies to John Hawkins; Pedro de Ponte, who helped Hawkins and Drake in the Caribbean Sea; the *cimarrón* Diego Grillo, who —together with the aforementioned Nuño de Silva, was one of the best informers of Drake (Taiano, 2013, p. 128).

## Depicting good pirates as Crypto-Catholics

Furthermore, I consider that the idea that Ramírez criticizes Miguel to protect himself from the Inquisition could be reinforced by the fact that he tries to justify his proximity to some pirates, which he describes as Crypto-Catholics.<sup>19</sup> It seems that *Infortunios*—by means of the Crypto-Catholics benevolent pirates who protect the Puerto Rican—provides the definition of “Protestants of profession”<sup>20</sup> to describe those British who were forced to abandon Catholicism to survive.<sup>21</sup> *Infortunios* subtly remembers that Crypto-Catholics were a vulnerable group in England. They lived in difficult circumstances and often risked succumbing to the practice of piracy to survive economically. They are Ramírez’s illustrative example of the Catholics’ social exclusion, which led them to practice a despicable trade. Simultaneously, they provide a logical explanation for Ramírez’s manumission since it became proof of their Catholic *caritas*. Crypto-Catholicism constitutes a sort of pattern justifying the compassionate actions of some pirates, mainly Nicpat and Dick, and the good relationship between Ramírez and them.<sup>22</sup> Ramírez states:

I should note, before recounting what I endured and suffered, working and undergoing much hardship over the course of so many years, that in all that time I experienced compassion and solace from my constant travails only in the persons of Master Gunner Nicpat and Dick, the quartermaster for Captain Bel, who both helped me materially in moments of extreme necessity behind their mates’ backs and proffered kind words encouraging me to be patient I am convinced Master Gunner was Catholic. Having set up a counsel at this place, the pirates’ discussion revolved around no other topic than what they were to do with me, and the seven companions left from my crew. They voted, and the majority were for cutting our throats, while others, not as cruel, cast their vote for marooning. Master Gunner, the Quartermaster, and Captain Donkin and his immediate mates were all opposed to both groups’ plans, reproaching the crew for conceiving of actions so unworthy of English generosity. (Sigüenza y Góngora, 2011, p. 125)

The “release” of Ramírez seems to be a sort of *manumissio inter amicos* carried out by Nicpat, Dick and Donkin. However, Ramírez does not take the risk of defining them as his redeemers, perhaps because they were outlaws. Ramírez, indeed, attributes his survival and manumission to the protection of the Virgen de Guadalupe from Mexico, which like her homonym from Cáceres, frees those in bondage. In this way, Alonso Ramírez shows that he has not subscribed to the defining doctrine of *solus Christus* adopted by the reformers who rejected the veneration of Mary and the saints. He highlights his Marian devotion and

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<sup>19</sup> The presence of Crypto-Catholics is common in the accounts of captivity because several narrators describe the internal turmoil that had to live for those who felt remorse for falsely adopting a different religion to survive. For instance, in *Vida de Pedro de Burguñy* (1655), the narrator describes the physical and spiritual pain of a Crypto-Catholic for having disowned his commitment to the Catholic church (Barbieri, 1820, p. 52.)

<sup>20</sup> Which is similar to the concept of “turcos de profesión” used by Antonio de Sosa in 1570 to indicate those who have adopted Islam but continued being Catholic inwardly (García Navarro, 1949, p. 10-14.)

<sup>21</sup> It is known that English Catholics were a small minority and were oppressed by two groups of statutes: first, the older penal laws, enacted at various times from Elizabeth’s reign onwards to extirpate Catholicism, but since the Restoration was generally in abeyance—they were partially enforced only during the Popish Plot crisis. Secondly, the two-Test Acts were designed to protect the Protestant majority against the establishment of a Catholic ascendancy (Bromley, 1970, p. 196.)

<sup>22</sup> The same applies to Spain. In this country, religious persecution was common. There were more than 67,000 trials held by the Spanish Inquisition between 1480 and 1820 in which several people were condemned by heresy, Crypto-Judaism, etc.

calls for her assistance to eliminate any suspicion regarding his faith and makes him completely antithetical to the pirates and Miguel: he respects the law, the Spanish crown and the Catholic dogmas. He is also superior to those who are Crypto-Catholics since he prefers to suffer than deny or hide his faith. The text promotes the redemptive power of the Virgen de Guadalupe and, at the same time, makes Ramírez a man chosen by her. He claims:

For I believe my liberty would not have been possible had I not kept continuously in my memory and affection Our Most Holy Mary of Guadalupe of Mexico, whose indebted slave I declare I will always remain.<sup>127</sup> I have, throughout my life, carried her portrait with me, and so when I was captured I greatly feared that the heretic pirates would profane her, given the way they had violently torn rosaries from our necks and, swearing at us for our heathenish superstition, cast them into the water; as best I could I managed to conceal her from their sight and on the first occasion when I was sent aloft to the masthead I hid her there. (Sigüenza y Góngora, 2011, p. 125)

### The role of corrupted officials and terrestrial redeemers

Regarding the corrupt public officials who denied Ramírez's rights, the first official who is described as antithetical to Gaspar de la Cerda is the *regidor* or regent of Oaxaca, don Luis Ramírez de Aguilar, who plays the role of the bad relative in *Infortunios*. His lack of commiseration and solidarity towards his relative Alonso Ramírez is considered a key determinant of Ramírez's social exclusion in his youth. The account states that the *regidor* refused any form of kinship with Alonso Ramírez instead of fulfilling his obligation of protecting him. The text seems to suggest that Luis Ramírez de Aguilar did not fulfill his role of relative-redeemer.<sup>23</sup> One sections states:

I was motivated to leave Mexico for the city of Oaxaca by the news I received that Don Luis Ramirez exercised the office of councilman there, and, because he was a relative on my mother's side, I trusted that he would at least lend me somewhat of a hand up the ladder of life, even if I did not dare hope for a boost disproportionate to the foundations of my merit. But the only compensation I received for a trip of eighty leagues was to have him deny our relations with many foul words, which left me to apply myself to strangers, not being willing to suffer the indifference of relatives, the more hurtfully lamentable as they were unexpected. (Sigüenza y Góngora, 2011, p. 108)

I was unable to find if don Luis Ramírez de Aguilar was part of the opposition groups that severely criticize Gaspar de la Cerda's policies.<sup>24</sup> However, it calls my attention the fact that in 1689, namely one year before *Infortunios* was written, this regent wrote a letter asking the viceroy for money to combat piracy and his request was denied:

<sup>23</sup> In the Old Testament, the Hebrew verb /ga'al/ has several interpretations, among them redeem, release, avenge, and being responsible for the relatives. In the specific case of the relatives, the redeemer-relative is a sort of /go-el/ or redeemer. In the social legislation of the Old Testament, the *go 'el* or kinsman acted to redeem an enslaved relative, buy back a family property that fell into the hands of others, and ensure family continuity in the case of a childless widow. In *Infortunios*, Luis Ramírez does not assume his role of protector (Henry, 1954, p. 5-15).

<sup>24</sup> Several anonymous texts accused Gaspar de la Cerda of negotiating the sale of titles of nobility, cooperating with wealthy merchants in smuggling, corruption, etcetera (Valle Pavón, 2006, p. 15-45). These texts were written by the "leales vasallos mexicanos" or "los vasallos más leales de su majestad" (Silva Prada, 2005, p. 228-229).

[1689] México, 355

The captain, Don Luis Ramírez, procurator, informs that the remoteness of the place with regard to Mexico prevents them from receiving help against attacks by pirates or revolted indigenous. He, therefore, calls for a decree commanding that in such cases the viceroy and royal officials approve and pay the expenditures incurred through the approval of the town council without excuse.

Decision: does not apply, 28 Abril 1689<sup>25</sup>

What makes difficult to justify this rejection is his correspondence with Carlos II. Gaspar de la Cerda always mentions the need to secure funding to counter piracy in the Mexican Gulf. Several of his letters focuses on his effort to reduce piracy and smuggling, his strategies to protect the transportation of goods, the construction of galleys, and the presence of foreigners with links to illegal commerce (Taiano, 2013, p. 165). His missives carry out self-aggrandizement that promotes his fitness to govern New Spain. Therefore, helping Luis Ramírez to resist piracy could be proof of his initiatives to protect the territory.

Besides don Luis Ramírez de Aguilar, another authority whose reputation is discredited in *Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez* is don Ceferino de Castro, the mayor and *fiel ejecutor* (city inspector of weights and measures in charge) who is accused of arbitrarily confiscating Ramírez's frigate and the merchandise within it. According to Ramírez, de Castro used as an excuse the Bull of the Crusade. The confiscation of Ramírez's frigate was not illegal because it followed the procedures established by the law to combat illegal commerce. Its apprehension (*aprehensión*) was the evidence (*probanza*) that Ramírez was an introducer (*introducido*) of illegal merchandise. The person who collaborated with pirates or committed acts of piracy or smuggling was considered disloyal to the king. This offence was punished with the death penalty and asset forfeiture, as indicated by the clause signed by Felipe IV in 1650:

That the person holding [smuggled merchandise] lose them and their properties, even if he is the first introducer of them and [...] he must be esteemed as such [introducer], and whoever is doing it [...] shall be punished with death penalty [...] and considered a traitor and a lawbreaker.<sup>26</sup>

Ramírez denied his status as a traitor and stated that he was a castaway protected by the Bull in *Coena Domini*. Therefore, his frigate and the goods contained therein could not be confiscated:

Don Zephyrino de Castro [...] continued with the investigation that he had set in motion with the idea of impounding what was left on the beach and aboard my frigate, applying the frivolous pretext of the laws

<sup>25</sup> [1689] México, 355

El capitán don Luis Ramírez de Aguilar, procurador, informa de cómo la lejanía respecto a México les impide recibir ayuda ante ataques de piratas o de indios rebelados. Por eso solicita una cédula mandando que en tales casos el virrey y los oficiales reales aprueben y paguen los gastos hechos con aprobación del cabildo, sin poner excusa.

Resolución "no ha lugar" 28 de abril de 1689 (*apud* Vila Vilar; Sarabia Viejo, 1985, p. 279). The English translation is mine.

<sup>26</sup> Que la persona en cuyo poder se hallaren las pierda, con más sus bienes, aunque de primer introducido de ellas, y [...] sea tenido por tal [introducido], y el que lo fuere [...] sea castigado con pena de muerte [...] y sea tenido por traidor, y quebrantador de nuestras órdenes (*apud* González de Salcedo, 1684, p. 48). The English translation is mine.

governing Cruzadas to justify his claim over all that shipwrecked property which I deemed was legally mine under the provisions of the Bull In Coena Domini [...] However, Don Christoval de Muros, the beneficiary [of the church in Tijosuco], opposed his plans strongly, arguing that such a road would facilitate the entry of privateers and pirates inland [...] I wanted to proceed to the beach to witness with my own eyes the iniquity of what was being done to me and my companions by people who were, as Spaniards and Catholics, in fact, obliged to come to my aid and assistance with their own wealth. Coming to the town of Tila, I was stopped by Antonio Zapata, a Second Lieutenant, who did not permit me to proceed further and told me he was under orders from Don Zepherino de Castro to warn me that if I did so I would be declared a traitor to the King (Sigüenza y Góngora, 2011, p. 149).

It is interesting the subterfuge used in *Infortunios* to make the asset forfeiture something illegal employing the Bull in *Coena Domini*. In accordance with this papal edict, the authority who unfairly confiscated the goods of a Christian navigator should be excommunicated (Contín, 1749, p. 25-36). Consequently, *Infortunios* does not simply aim to discredit Ceferino de Castro, but it also urges his ex-communication. Additionally, the above-mentioned paragraph mentions the first person who is introduced as a redeemer: the Franciscan priest Cristóbal de Muros who received Ramírez and his companions in the parish house of the church of San Agustín, located in Tijosuco. He offers them material and spiritual support. He helps them to thank God for surviving captivity, takes their confession, and so forth. In other words, In *Infortunios*, Cristóbal de Muros is a sign of God's merciful love for the neediest members of society. He states:

I will never be able to repay sufficiently what I owe him; words fail me in praising him. He came out to greet us with fatherly affection and led us into the church to give thanks due to Our Lord God for having brought us out of the oppressive tyranny of the English, for having saved us from the dangers of so many seas, and for having delivered us most recently from our suffering along these coasts. Once our orations were finished, he took us, accompanied by the entire town, to his home. (Sigüenza y Góngora, 2011, p. 145)

Another person who is lauded by Alonso Ramírez is the “ilustrísimo señor obispo don Juan Cano Sandoval” [illustrious lord bishop don Juan Cano Sandoval], who “los socorrió con dos pesos” [assisted me with a present of two pesos]:

The inconveniences I suffered in this city are imponderable. Every inhabitant forced me to tell my story with all the details, just as it is written down in this book, and not only once but many times over. To this effect, they would drag me—and my companions—from house to house, but without fail, they would cut me off at noontime. This city—and, generally speaking, the entire Province—is rich, fertile, and very economical, despite which I received assistance from very few of its people, except for three: Licenciado Don Christoval de Muros, my sole benefactor; a servant of Don Melchor Pacheco who gave me a greatcoat; and His Lordship the Bishop Don Juan Cano y Sandoval, who assisted me with a present of two pesos. (Sigüenza y Góngora, 2011, p. 148)

In other words, if Cristóbal de Muros provided shelter and spiritual comfort, the bishop began to make tangible the financial assistance that Alonso Ramírez will obtain from the viceroy, who is described, as seen previously, as the greatest protector of the

Puerto Rican ex-captive.

## Conclusions

*Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez* shares with other captivity narratives a dominant motif: the representation of the protagonist as an incorruptible individual. Alonso Ramírez's self-mythification is a characteristic that constitutes the best evidence that the text fully embraces the corpus of *memorias* or *relaciones de cautivos*. Alonso Ramírez assumes the role model assigned to captives and becomes a beloved son of the Catholic church as represented by Cristóbal de Muros and Juan Cano de Sandoval, since his captivity is considered a sort of *imitatio Christi*. At the same time, the support he receives is used as evidence of the efficiency of the Novohispanic church and the vice-patron of New Spain, namely the viceroy. It seems that Ramírez's self-mythification serves three primary functions: the first one is to make him a victim of the circumstances, the second one is to promote the Marian devotion, and the third one is to boost the image of Gaspar de la Cerda as a terrestrial redeemer. Ramírez propagates an idealized image of himself, giving the impression that he has always been loyal to Spain and Catholicism. His image of an oppressed Catholic contrasts with the depiction of his cruel Protestant captors. The difference between his martyrdom and their perversity seems to continue with the propagandist rhetoric present in the accounts of captivity written during the Counter-Reformation period. Another counter-reformist element is the Marian Devotion. The Virgin of Guadalupe is a powerful intercessor before God. She has a privileged place in *Infortunios* and pleads Ramírez's cases before her divine son. According to the Puerto Rican, she is a source of strength for him during his captivity. Following the Counter-Reformation's scheme of thought, in *Infortunios* the cult of Mary is part of a political Mariology. She is depicted as a mediatrix and as a redeemer. To be precise, in *Infortunios* the Virgen of Guadalupe is a co-redemptrix whose participation is essential for the Puerto Rican's redemption. Another Counter-Reformation's motif is the role played by the Crypto-Catholic pirates who secretly continue to keep their Catholic commitment. *Infortunios* alludes to the experience of British Catholics as a segregated minority that has to hide their religion and have to become pirates to survive. Crypto-Catholics suffer harm and marginalization in England. They are victims, according to Ramírez, of an identified perpetrator: the Protestant British. Piracy and religion are important motifs to propagate the idea that the British are subversive by nature. They incarnate the enemy of Catholicism. *Infortunios* deploys this rhetoric to describe them as dangerous people who must be treated with distrust. In fact, they permit an explicit revindication of war.

*Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez* tries to persuade the reader about the cause of the problems in the overseas territories: the presence of foreigners and the risk of dealing with them. The book organizes the events around a cause-effect framework that could be defined as foreigners=piracy. Foreign pirates are represented according to the Greek-Roman perspective —namely, they are described following the paradigm of the cruel and soulless adversary or *hostis*, which constitute a political unit. They are a conceptual prefabricated enemy, which manifests through the creation of a foreign prototype of ethnical-religious inferiority derived from the Post Tridentine paradigm, the rudiments of the Augustinian Just war theory and the circumstances that —since ancient times— make piracy a *casus belli*. According to it Spain and New Spain have the right to legitime defense and punishment for tort in the geopolitical sphere. *Infortunios* is not supporting peace (*jure pacis*) but it is openly promoting the law of war (*jure belli*). Therefore, anyone who deals with them must be treated accordingly. *Infortunios* shows contempt towards those who are close to them, as we could see in the description of the Sevillian Miguel who is stigmatized as a traitor to Spain and Catholicism. Miguel is, according to Ramírez, someone who deserves

to be ostracized because he does not share the Spanish point of view and conception of religion. He, as an apostate, is a dangerous internal enemy. He represents the fifth column. Ramírez openly accuses him of treason. The book reveals an internal political mistrust in the Spanish monarchy. Therefore, it shows that New Spain was a society of tensions and suspicions that involved accusations of disloyalty and betrayal. Miguel represents the insider with questionable loyalty and identity. He is a suitable target to blame for the Spanish decline, a recognizable cultural symbol that carries negative connotations. Therefore, after analyzing the text it can be concluded that *Infortunios* is part of the Counter-Reformation propaganda written in New Spain. It fuels the conflict between Catholics and Protestants. The text tries to use the power of printing as a defense of Spain and Catholicism.

Regarding Gaspar de la Cerda: he represents the good ruler. He is depicted as a virtuous, wise and humane viceroy who cares for his subjects, especially those who are experiencing misfortunes. He has the power to govern and lead the viceroyalty morally. In addition, *Infortunios* defames several viceregal officers to make the reader disapprove of their behavior and decisions. Luis Ramírez and Ceferino de Castro are portrayed as undesirable persons because in contrast to Gaspar de la Cerda they do not know how to preserve the social balance and promote social justice. These characters are part of a collective identity that manifests a deeper social and political process of the decline of the Spanish Monarchy. In the specific case of Ceferino de Castro, Ramírez makes a sort of transfer or projection of the allegations against him. Castro is presented as someone who deserves to be excommunicated.

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