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The Imagology of Slavery and Freedom in Simon Pfeiffer's Memoirs, or a Historical Glimpse of Algeria, Introduced and Translated into Arabic by Abu al-Eid Doudou

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Abstract

This article acknowledges the contribution of the thinker and translator Abu al-Eid Doudou to establishing a fundamental foundation for Algerian comparative literature. It examines the image of Algeria during the period of the Deys and the early years of French occupation as seen by the German traveller and physician Simon Pfeiffer in his memoirs, written in 1832 and entitled *My Travels and Five Years of Captivity in Algeria*.

The article investigates realistic representations of Algeria's political, social, and economic life through the duality of slavery and freedom, which the Algerian people experienced and which Simon Pfeiffer himself also lived through under Ottoman rule and later during the naval conflict between the Algerian and French fleets that paved the way for the occupation.

Keywords: Algerian comparative literature; memoirs and travel writing; the image of Algeria through the eyes of the Other; the duality of slavery and freedom.

Introduction

When the "Other" was a slave?! For "us," it seems self-evident that the Other is a Western person, whatever that person's identity, affiliation, or religion. Yet it is strange to imagine this Other wearing the garments of slavery. It seems inconceivable that a European who has donned a war helmet and wielded the weapons of cunning and deception would acknowledge enslavement. Someone who takes up the pen, however, can recount the pain of bondage and explain how Algeria placed him aboard a vessel of physical and psychological survival through the use of a surgical scalpel.

Despite the generosity shown to Simon Pfeiffer by the Dey, or Algerian ruler, Pfeiffer did not leave Algeria on the first vessel available to him. He witnessed the treachery of the Turkish Janissaries and the destruction of Algerian ports by French vessels. This aggression may have led him to choose to remain in Algeria longer and witness the beginning of the French campaign. He described in detail the battle between the French and Algerian fleets, presented the Algerian account and the attitudes of some members of the population towards the Dey and the battle's consequences, and wrote about Algeria's relationship with Ottoman authority and the Egyptian government under Muhammad Ali, as well as Turkey's and Egypt's relations with France. He also discussed crimes committed by Jews alongside the French army. In these respects, Pfeiffer differed from other European historians who justified the French campaign (Pfeiffer, 1974, pp. 8–9).

Pfeiffer's memoirs are connected to the writings of other German travellers and historians whom Abu al-Eid Doudou discussed in his book *Algeria in the Works of German Travellers (1830–1855)*. Doudou's interest in translating foreign books about a period of Algerian history stemmed from their ability to fill historical gaps and reveal episodes not covered in Arabic historical writing. He articulated the central questions underlying this project: "How can we rewrite our history when we can rarely find national sources of the kind available to other peoples? How can we do so when we already know that our history was written by foreign authors whose purpose, in most cases, was insinuation and distortion, because their interests consistently required severing every connection between us and our ancestors' past?" (Doudou, 1975, p. 6). To identify distortions and misrepresentations in histories, memoirs, and travel accounts—and then avoid or correct them—Doudou

argued that anyone proficient in a foreign language had a duty to contribute to rewriting national history by translating foreign texts into Arabic. Such translations would enable specialist historians to evaluate the texts, relate them to historical evidence, and compare them with other accounts in order to assess their accuracy and correspondence with historical events (Doudou, 1975, p. 6).

The importance of European accounts of Algeria during the French occupation also lies in the absence of Arabic historical texts describing that period. In this context, foreign accounts can help fill the gap. At the end of Ottoman rule and during the French occupation, Algeria held large numbers of captives and enslaved people from many European peoples. Travellers, scholars, and poets also visited the country and, after returning home, recorded their observations in memoirs, letters, and travel narratives. These works preserve personal experiences in Algeria, relationships with its inhabitants, and reactions to events. They invite Algerian scholars in particular, and Arab scholars more generally, to undertake analytical, critical, and comparative studies.

I. Comparative Literature: Its Origins and Branches

1. Comparative Literature and Its Relationship to Literary History

In contemporary literary studies, there is no single, precisely defined concept of comparative literature that can be adopted without reservation when raising, discussing, and resolving related questions. Since approximately the middle of the twentieth century, this field has been understood in increasingly new directions, often quite different from the approaches prevalent when it emerged in the late nineteenth century—or even earlier in that century, when it remained largely an intellectual possibility, an idea, and an ambitious project (Bahi, 1996, p. 11).

To clarify the concept of comparative literature, we may recall Henry Remak's definition: it is "the study of literature beyond the boundaries of a particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other fields of knowledge and belief on the other, such as the arts (painting, sculpture, architecture, and music), philosophy, history, and the social sciences (politics, economics, sociology, science, and religion). In short, it is the comparison of one literature with another and of literature with other fields of human expression" (Remak, as cited in Bahi, 1996, p. 18). For Remak, comparison takes place between different national literatures and between literature, the fine arts, and the human and social sciences. It does not require proof of influence or reception; what matters is the difference between the literature under consideration and the arts and sciences of other national cultures.

Abdu Abboud shares this inclusive perspective. He argues that comparative studies should not restrict comparison to literary phenomena linked by demonstrable influence and reception. Instead, comparison should remain open to all meaningful correspondences between literary phenomena belonging to more than one national literature, provided that these comparisons are productive rather than arbitrary. Productive comparisons possess substantial epistemological value and help us understand and interpret comparative literary phenomena more effectively (Abboud, 1999, p. 14).

By contrast, Muhammad Ghunaymi Hilal requires evidence of influence and reception when studying relations between literatures. He explains that comparative literature has a historical meaning because it studies points of contact between literatures in different languages, their numerous and complex connections in the present and past, and the influence or reception arising from those historical relationships. Such connections may concern the artistic origins of genres and literary schools, intellectual movements, subjects, situations, and characters treated or imitated in literature, or the images of different countries as reflected in the literatures of other nations. These images form artistic links among peoples and states through human relationships that vary according to the images and writers involved, including factors influencing travel writing (Hilal, 1992, p. 16). In Hilal's account, comparison becomes complex because its relationships extend beyond individual textual features to the artistic origins of genres and schools, the nature of ideas, themes, and characters, and representations of countries and regions. These matters relate not only to literary and social history but also to travel writing.

The lack of agreement on a unified definition may be linked to the widespread use of the French term *La littérature comparée* when the discipline emerged. The term combines two words associated with literature and comparison, yet scholars have not agreed on the precise form or meaning of either. In Arabic, for example, the term "comparative literature" uses the singular noun "literature" followed by an adjective in the passive-participial form. Not all scholars accept this formulation, since comparison actually takes place between two or more literatures rather than within a single literature (Darwish, 2002, p. 5). Furthermore, one side of the comparison need not be literature in the narrow sense: it may belong to the fine arts or another form of human activity. The passive form also creates a terminological difficulty, as it may suggest that literature is the endpoint rather than the starting point of comparison (Darwish, 2002, p. 6). This raises the possibility of using a term equivalent to "comparative literature" in an active sense, or the plural "comparative literatures," so that texts may be compared without assigning priority to either side. The essential task is to identify the locations and factors of influence and reception.

Because comparative literature concerns relations of influence and reception, it inherited this characteristic from an earlier discipline: literary history. Literary historians gather historical information surrounding literary texts and their authors, describe textual features, trace the origins and transformations of literary ideas, and follow their movement between cultures. Comparative literature has, however, taken over some of this pioneering role, to the extent that some scholars define it in terms similar to literary history. For Hilal, comparative literature explains facts historically, traces how they move from one language to another, investigates how they derive from one another, and identifies general features retained as they pass from

one literature to another as well as particular features lost or acquired in the process (Hilal, 1992, p. 20). To distinguish comparative literature from imitation of literary history, comparatists have assigned it a distinctive pioneering role: representing the life of the Other through the writing of someone who travelled to and lived among them. This role became a branch of comparative literature known as imagology.

2. Imagology as a Branch of Comparative Literature

Imagology explores the representation of people and cultures in writing. Since writing is an expansive field of abundance, construction, and destruction, a single image may fragment into many images, and those fragments may generate further variations, each offering a different picture of life. These images may all be realistic even when they contradict one another. This fragmented quality becomes apparent when two perspectives—the Self and the Other—are brought into comparison under what is called the study of literary images, a field whose claim to scientific objectivity and certainty is itself worth questioning.

Majida Hamoud uses the term “imagology” to designate the study of literary images as a branch of comparative literature. It refers to a literary expression of meaningful distance between two cultural systems belonging to different places. An image, although partly connected to history in its factual and political sense, also belongs to the social imagination and the cultural or ideological space in which it appears. National identity thus stands in relation to the Other, who may contradict the Self or stand alongside it as an equal and complement, depending on the historical relationship between them (Hamoud, 2000, pp. 106–107).

The origins of this branch of comparative literature are usually traced to the first half of the nineteenth century, when the French writer Madame de Staël undertook an extended visit to Germany. Hostility and misunderstanding between the French and German peoples were intensifying at the time. During her stay, she was surprised by the extent of French ignorance and misunderstanding of Germany despite the countries’ geographical proximity. She discovered that the French knew little about German society, culture, literature, or natural environment. They imagined the Germans as coarse and uncivilized, speaking an unattractive language and possessing no noteworthy literary or cultural achievements. In short, one people had constructed an image of another people whom it regarded as an enemy.

During her travels, however, Madame de Staël discovered that the German people possessed many virtues, including kindness, integrity, and honesty. She was also impressed by the beauty of the natural landscape, particularly the Rhine and the Black Forest, and by the richness of German literature and the high level of German philosophy. Her journey resulted in the book *Germany* (De l’Allemagne, 1810), in which she sought to correct the distorted images of Germans, their country, and their culture held by the French. The book may therefore be regarded as an early milestone in the literary study of the Other, or imagology (Hamoud, 2000, p. 107).

Saïd Allouche also uses the term “imagology” for the study of Arabs as represented by Western writers and of the West as represented by Arab writers. He traces its beginnings to a period earlier than Madame de Staël’s account of Germany, arguing that early Arabic travel literature consciously and unconsciously prepared the ground for imagology. The travel accounts of Ibn Fadlan and Ibn Battuta, for example, contain exotic and mythical images of the Other’s conduct and life experiences (Allouche, 1986, p. 146).

This broader historical approach opens imagological study to Arabic and Western travel writing, both ancient and modern, whether scientific, exploratory, religious, or commercial. Every traveller conveys a personal view of the Other, whether that Other is a friend, an enemy, or a neutral party. Imagology is therefore a particularly useful branch of comparative studies for discussing truth and falsehood—or, more precisely, the aesthetics of distortion and misrepresentation in depictions of the Other. Hamoud, however, resists describing such images simply as lies, distortions, or even misunderstandings, especially when the East is depicted through Western eyes. In such representations, exoticism and the distinctiveness of Arab identity may become essential requirements in constructing the image. According to Hamoud, Western literary representations of the East have two principal characteristics (Hamoud, 2000, pp. 109–110):

1. Unrealism: however hard a Western writer tries, the writer cannot see except through their own perspective and horizon. This is an ordinary epistemological limitation and is generally unrelated to good or bad intentions. Likewise, an Eastern observer cannot see the West except through an Eastern perspective.

2. The image of the East meets European cultural needs in both production and reception, above all the desire for exoticism and the need to affirm a distinct identity.

Exoticism has considerable entertainment value because it offers excitement, particularly when combined with adventures in distant lands. Moreover, when Europeans encounter images of other peoples, they may become more attached to their own cultural identity, discovering the supposed virtues of their way of life and the superiority they attribute to their culture over others.

II. The Imagology of Slavery and Freedom in Simon Pfeiffer’s Book

The literary image that a writer constructs of a foreign people is rarely based on a solid foundation of experience, knowledge, and comprehensive understanding of that society. Such an image often derives from journeys to a foreign country or from a prolonged stay there for study, work, or medical treatment. In other cases, a writer lives abroad because life at home has become unbearable, or because the writer has been captured and forcibly transported to a country never visited before. The writer may know something about that country, but the knowledge may be shaped by colonial, imperial, and cultural

assumptions that divide the world into strong and weak, victor and vanquished. This was the situation in Pfeiffer's case. It prompts questions about the objectivity of the ideas presented in his unusual travel account and about the relationship between historical realism and the subjective feelings and opinions recorded by his literary pen, especially when he addresses slavery and freedom between a European-German Self and a Turkish-Algerian Other.

1. Simon Pfeiffer's Life: A Biography Written by Its Subject

Simon Pfeiffer was born in the Rheinhessen region of Germany around 1810. He began studying surgery at the age of thirteen and made notable progress. He then travelled to the Netherlands before reaching the age of fifteen, where he joined a naval school and demonstrated exceptional ability in medicine and surgery. In December 1824, orders were issued for the ship to leave port. Pfeiffer and his colleagues sailed aboard the *Diana* into the Mediterranean to protect merchant ships from pirate attacks and provide medical services. After visiting several European ports, they were forced to stop at a port in İzmir, Turkey, an event that radically changed Pfeiffer's life. He went ashore with his patients and spent his time treating and caring for them. One evening in July 1825, he went walking in the forest with several companions when an armed group of Janissaries attacked them, killing some and capturing others. Pfeiffer was among those taken prisoner. He was added to a group of Greek captives aboard an Algerian vessel, which sailed that day for the port of Algiers and arrived twenty-five days later (Pfeiffer, 1974, pp. 4–5).

Pfeiffer entered the household of the vizier Khaznaji Effendi and worked as a cook in his kitchen for two years. In time, his medical knowledge became known. When Khaznaji fell ill, he summoned Pfeiffer for treatment. Pfeiffer succeeded, and the vizier rewarded him by appointing him his personal physician. Nevertheless, Pfeiffer remained a captive of the position and palace until he was released shortly before the French occupation of Algiers. He returned to Germany on 16 September 1830 and resumed his work in medicine and surgery. In 1832, he published a book about his years of captivity in Algeria, entitled *My Travels and Five Years of Captivity in Algeria*. In 1833, he followed it with a supplement entitled *Description of the Regency of Algiers and Its Inhabitants*. Thereafter, he appears to have been mentioned neither in surgery nor in writing (Pfeiffer, 1974, pp. 5–6).

At the very least, Simon Pfeiffer may be described as an enigmatic figure in the history of German literature and travel writing. Without the book he wrote about his captivity, his name might never have become known; without Abu al-Eid Doudou's translation, he would have had little presence in Algerian cultural studies in particular or Arab studies more broadly.

Doudou's decision to translate the book made it possible to access the historical, political, social, and literary knowledge contained in Pfeiffer's account of a little-known period in Algerian history and of Algeria's relations with Turkish and French politics.

2. Abu al-Eid Doudou: The Translator and His Role in Establishing Comparative Literature in Algeria

Abu al-Eid Doudou was born on 13 January 1934 in the hamlet of Tamendjar, in the commune of El Ancer, Jijel Province. He learned the basics of Arabic and Islamic teachings at the village Qur'anic school before travelling to Constantine to study at the Abdelhamid Ben Badis Institute. He then moved to Tunisia to continue his education at the Zaytuna Mosque, from which he obtained the certificate of qualification in 1951. He subsequently went to Iraq to study at the Higher Teachers' Institute in Baghdad, earning a degree in Arabic literature in 1956. The National Liberation Front awarded him a scholarship for postgraduate study in Austria, where he specialized in Arabic and Persian literature, Islamic sciences, philosophy, and ancient languages, particularly Latin. He received his doctorate in 1961, at the age of twenty-seven, with a dissertation on Ibn Nazif al-Hamawi. He later worked at the university from which he had graduated and then at the University of Kiel in Germany. In the 1960s, after Algeria regained national sovereignty in 1962, he returned home and taught in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature at the University of Algiers.

Doudou died on 16 January 2004, leaving a rich and diverse literary and cultural legacy. He published several short-story collections, including *The Olive Lake* (1967), *Dar al-Thalatha* (1971), *The Silver Road* (1981), *Food and Eyes* (1998), and *Social Reflections*, first published in 1985 under the title *Behavioural Images*. He also wrote two dramatic works, *The Soil* (1968) and *al-Bashir* (1981), as well as critical studies such as *Books and Personalities* (1971) and *Algeria in the Stories of German Travellers* (1975). Translation was among his most important contributions: he translated numerous Arabic literary works into German and translated into Arabic *The Golden Ass*, one of the earliest forms of the novel in literary history, by the second-century Latin-language writer Lucius Apuleius, who was of Algerian origin (Abdous, 2021).

Abu al-Eid Doudou is regarded as a pioneer of comparative literature in Algeria. His command of several living languages enabled him to build cultural bridges between Arabic readers and major works of world culture. He translated from several languages, particularly from German into Arabic and from Arabic into German. His translations from German into Arabic numbered more than twenty-four published and unpublished works. Few scholars who followed him continued this work, and those who did tended to focus on limited areas such as philosophy. Translations in other fields—especially historical translation—have remained rare, despite their scientific value, which is no less important than that of French- and English-language writing on Algeria's rich national history (Abdous, 2021).

3. The Imagology of Slavery and Freedom in Simon Pfeiffer's Memoirs

Memoirs, or a Historical Glimpse of Algeria, translated in 1974, gives a detailed account of Simon Pfeiffer's life in captivity as well as aspects of Algerian society before the French occupation. The book has two main parts: the first recounts his

experiences as a captive, while the second discusses Algerian customs and traditions and the country's economic and political circumstances on the eve of occupation.

3.1. Slavery as an Illusion

Suspicion of the Other may be the first false image that comes to the Self's mind before it has any direct knowledge of the Other. This is what happened to Simon Pfeiffer as his ship approached the port of Algiers and he saw the enchanting city for the first time. Its whitewashed buildings rose above one another, interspersed with mosque domes, minarets, palaces, and the citadel of the Casbah. Although he acknowledged the city's beauty, he was overcome by fear and imagined that he was about to endure new forms of suffering unlike anything he had previously experienced. He wrote: "I am unable to convey the impression made upon me by the sight of Algiers at first glance. Suddenly, everything I had heard about the horrors of Algeria since childhood appeared before me. I began to contemplate my present situation, and my limbs trembled at the thought of my terrible future. Yet I remembered that I had escaped many dangers in childhood, and I recovered some of my courage. I became convinced that a merciful God was watching over me and would give me the strength to endure my new suffering" (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 12).

The new suffering he anticipated was a harsh life of bondage inside one of the city's ornate white buildings. This strange preconception raises questions that the memoir does not answer. Why did Pfeiffer not describe his fear of captivity aboard the ship, where he spent twenty-five days? Did he deliberately omit it, or was he among a group whose members shared the experience of being captured? Did his terror at the sight of Algiers lead him to imagine that slavery in Turkey was preferable to the horrors he had heard about in Algeria? Finally, how far can misunderstanding be overcome simply by living alongside the Algerian Muslim Other?

3.2. Enslavement in the Vizier's Kitchen

From aspiring physician to despised cook, Pfeiffer was selected to work as a cook in the palace of the vizier Khaznaji Effendi. This stage of his enslavement began when he was made to wear the distinctive clothing of slaves and met fourteen enslaved men of different nationalities, from America, Spain, Italy, Greece, and the Netherlands (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 15). This diversity may be read as evidence of the reach of the Algerian navy and Algeria's maritime power in the Mediterranean, which also helps explain Pfeiffer's terror when he first saw the city and recalled the frightening stories he had heard about it.

Kitchen work meant that hunger was not necessarily a problem: leftovers from the kitchen and food remaining on the vizier's table were given to Pfeiffer and the other enslaved men. The work also came with accommodation. Pfeiffer and his companions slept in a spacious storeroom furnished with boards covered in sheepskins and light woollen blankets.

An enslavement learned from the Other. Once food and bedding were available, Pfeiffer's principal concern became the behaviour of his fellow captives, particularly what he regarded as their lack of cleanliness and barbarous conduct. He wrote: "Our storeroom and bedding were not of poor quality, and it would have been possible to keep them clean. Unfortunately, some of our companions did not do so. They tended towards disorder and a lack of discipline, presenting those of us who valued cleanliness with a vivid example of behaviour that made our stay unpleasant and caused illnesses and other consequences whose effects appeared later. These barbarians would not listen to anyone's advice, and they quarrelled among themselves more than once" (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 16). Pfeiffer also complained about insects, rats, and snakes, although these could be caught and killed. What troubled him more was the lack of cleanliness, or the deliberate spread of filth by some of the enslaved men, especially because they were his companions in the palace kitchen. More troubling still was the fact that those who had previously valued cleanliness appeared to abandon it, creating problems that undermined what he called order.

3.3. Escape from Slavery

Escape requires knowledge of the Other. Knowledge of the Other cannot be achieved without learning the Other's language. Pfeiffer therefore resolved to learn Turkish despite the heavy daily workload in the palace kitchen and the blows and lashes he received from his masters when he failed to understand their orders. He recalled: "The cooks often urged us to work by beating us. In some corners of the palace there were sticks and whips, which were frequently used against us at first, when we did not know Turkish. This forced us to learn the language. It was very difficult for me initially, but I managed to learn it more easily than my companions. I learned words by asking about objects and pointing to them, and I wrote them on the wall with a nail or a piece of charcoal (...) As soon as I began to understand a little, I listened like a mouse to the Turks as they spoke among themselves or told stories" (Pfeiffer, 1974, pp. 18–19). Learning Turkish helped free him from beatings and allowed him to take pleasure in understanding the daily conversations and stories of the Other. Nevertheless, he could not accept remaining enslaved, and he joined the fourteen captives in preparing an escape plan.

Escape despite betrayal. After six months in the kitchen, the captives decided to devise a plan to get past the palace guards and then the city guards, reach the port, board a ship, and gain freedom. They had little to lose because their lives belonged to their masters, so escape seemed unavoidable and worth the risk, however long it took. Pfeiffer was deeply shocked when his companions withdrew as the plan began to take shape. He wrote: "I was astonished when all the slaves withdrew and declared that they no longer wished to take part in a plan whose success was uncertain. I except only the Dutchman, who was determined to escape: either he would gain his freedom or die with me. The other slaves had helped devise the plan, insisted on joining it, and encouraged me to undertake the escape, yet they now retreated in cowardice" (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 22). The idea of freedom had taken hold of Pfeiffer's mind, and his pride would not allow him to retreat or delay. He fled with his Dutch friend, but as they approached the port, Janissary guards seized them and returned them to the palace, where they were

beaten and flogged. The shock of the punishment was less painful than discovering that one of the other captives had betrayed them as soon as they escaped.

Crossing beyond slavery. Changing religion might have offered a temporary solution by making Pfeiffer a different and more favoured kind of slave in the eyes of his Turkish masters, but it would not have released him from captivity. Conversion was therefore not his priority when he considered freedom. While he was being transported with other captives aboard the Turkish ship, its renegade English Muslim captain advised him to embrace Islam, but Pfeiffer remained silent. Some Turks at the palace also invited him to convert, and again he did not respond. He devoted only a few lines of his memoirs to the matter (Pfeiffer, 1974, pp. 5, 19).

3.4. The Continuation of Slavery

Freedom has no key except death or patience. Slavery weighed increasingly heavily on Pfeiffer, and the desire for freedom became an obsession, although he felt unable to act. His failed escape made him fear punishment for even the smallest mistake and the possibility of remaining captive for life. At times, this prospect drove him towards thoughts of suicide. He wrote: "I resolved several times to end my life with the kitchen knife, my only weapon. Yet in those very dark moments, when life in my present circumstances became a heavy burden and my imagination knew no limits, I felt a higher power suddenly restraining me and drawing me back from the abyss into which I was about to fall. Peace then returned to my soul, and other thoughts came to mind. Gradually these episodes became rare and eventually turned into a lasting sadness. I sought escape and help only in my religious faith, which freed me from despair and dark thoughts" (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 25).

It is difficult to imagine a young man who had excelled in medicine and surgery from an early age, who had attempted to escape despite the guards' strength, endured weeks of beatings, and tolerated the humiliation of kitchen work and filthy sleeping quarters, contemplating suicide. Yet the thought that freedom might be permanently unattainable shattered his dream and extinguished his hope of liberation. His attachment to his Christian faith helped him survive his despair and move into a different form of enslavement, one that taught him more about living alongside the Other while renewing his dream of freedom, release, and return home.

3.5. Medical Enslavement

From kitchen slavery to medical service. After two years of enduring pain and practising patience, Pfeiffer's circumstances changed when the vizier Khaznaji Effendi summoned him to provide medical treatment, having learned that he had studied medicine in Europe. Drawing on his European training and his experience in the Turkish-Arab environment, the young physician prepared a remedy that cured the vizier. Khaznaji praised him, gave him a gold watch, and appointed him his personal physician (Pfeiffer, 1974, pp. 25–27). Pfeiffer's life then involved less oppressive forms of captivity and greater comfort: he occupied two large rooms in the palace, wore fine cotton clothes, and ate good food. In his words: "In short, I had changed from a despised Christian dog and an oppressed young cook, exposed to ill treatment by the cooks and other Turks, into the personal physician of Khaznaji Effendi, as though it had all happened through magic" (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 27). This development prompts an important question: were these material privileges enough to make Pfeiffer happy? How could a young man who had attempted escape and endured more than two years of suffering forget or set aside his demand for freedom—not merely freedom from the kitchen and access to the vizier's favour, but the freedom to return to his European-German homeland?

An artificial freedom. The happiness Pfeiffer felt was temporary, and his freedom had to be performed and displayed before the Other, particularly because he had won the palace household's approval. He was not expected simply to enjoy his improved material circumstances or to consider how the Turks regarded him. He wrote: "My new position was more difficult, for I had to behave only in ways appropriate to my rank. I lacked nothing except my freedom, which meant everything to me. It was for freedom that I had tried to escape and risked my life" (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 27). Pfeiffer's commitment to genuine freedom distinguishes him from the other men who had shared the kitchen with him. They had been insulted and beaten but had abandoned the idea of escape. He, too, had endured humiliation and violence, but insisted on learning the Other's language, planned and attempted escape, endured the pain of failure and betrayal, and then established himself in an honourable profession among his masters while awaiting a peaceful solution that would restore his freedom.

3.6. A Form of Freedom within Slavery

The enslavement of routine and reflection. Pfeiffer's life became more predictable because he had professional duties whenever he was summoned. He spent his remaining time talking with members of the palace household and his fellow captives, recalling the harsh events he had experienced, or thinking about the future. He wished to continue studying medicine, but the lack of specialized books made this impossible. He sometimes spent his free time on the palace roof, comforting his captive heart by observing the sea and the city's outskirts through a telescope, or amusing himself with the palace's parrots and birds (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 29). A full year of routine passed, and the young man nearly surrendered to the reality of slavery, almost forgetting his dream of liberation until the rupture in Algerian-French relations offered a glimmer of hope.

Captivity as an eyewitness. Living in the palace enabled Pfeiffer to learn of a bitter dispute between the Dey and the French consul, Pierre Deval. Deval conveyed France's refusal to continue paying the annual tribute that allowed its ships to pass through the Mediterranean basin. France instead preferred to send its fleet and troops to the Algerian coast, provoking the Dey, who struck Deval on the head with his fly-whisk (Pfeiffer, 1974, pp. 33–34).

Pfeiffer described several naval engagements between the French and Algerian fleets over the two years from 1828 to 1830. He relied on what he observed from the palace roof and on reports brought by Janissary soldiers or palace servants. Although tension prevailed inside and outside the palace, he felt calm and reassured, as the Islamic way of life he observed around him coexisted with his own Christian religious feelings. He described his situation as a kind of “free slavery”: “To return to my Islamic-Christian life, to a life of free slavery, I should mention that my life was peaceful and that I complained only of boredom. Hope for deliverance was once again burning brightly” (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 47). By accepting and living alongside the Other, practising medicine, drawing, making birdcages, and learning to write in Arabic and Turkish scripts, Pfeiffer was able to fulfil some of his ambitions. The vizier also granted some of his requests. In this way, Pfeiffer tasted a form of freedom while captive—much like the birds in the cages he made and displayed for others’ pleasure, although the birds themselves longed for freedom without captivity.

3.7. Freedom between Hope and Fulfilment

The price of a valuable slave’s freedom. The vizier was prepared to meet Pfeiffer’s requests except for one: his release. Pfeiffer recalled: “I had asked the vizier several times to release me, but I always received an uncertain answer. He told me that this was impossible under the prevailing circumstances. On one such occasion, I told myself that he was willing to grant any other request and would release me as soon as he found a physician to take my place” (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 54). Pfeiffer believed that freedom was not far away, particularly because the vizier had released three Greek captives at his request. Why, then, would he not release Pfeiffer once another physician had been found? The matter seemed no longer to depend on the dominance of the stronger party or a desire to possess slaves, but rather on the possibility of moral purification when illness struck and enemies and conspirators surrounded a person.

Hardship intensified in Algeria, while the vizier’s illness and sorrow grew. Although Pfeiffer was glad that his freedom might come with the fall of Algiers, he wanted to receive it from the person who had taken it away. He wrote: “I continued waiting for many hours, and whenever I heard a sound I imagined that I could hear the French trumpets and drums. A hundred times I climbed to the roof of our palace with my telescope to see those who would grant me freedom, but each time I came down disappointed, anxious, and sad. Fate, however, decreed that I should gain my freedom before the liberators arrived” (Pfeiffer, 1974, pp. 85–86). Pfeiffer had hastily assumed that the French occupier, as a fellow European, would be the first to liberate him after victory. Once again, he was mistaken: it was the vizier who had held him captive, but had treated him with kindness and affection, who released him shortly before the palace fell. The vizier entrusted him with one final task that affirmed the nobility of his medical vocation and, in the vizier’s view, promised divine reward in this life and the next.

Repaying kindness and obtaining freedom. Pfeiffer was the vizier’s trusted physician and the only doctor in the city, so he was asked to treat hundreds of wounded men. He did not hesitate to accept. The vizier told him: “A large number of wounded men have been brought from the battlefield to Algiers. Since we have no doctors, the Pasha has asked me to send you to the barracks where the wounded have been taken, so that you may dress their wounds. I am certain that you will not withhold your help from these unfortunate people, especially because your grateful heart will not forget that, for several years, when the Muslims were prosperous and you were their slave, you received from them nothing but kindness, affection, and good treatment. You also ate their bread. By treating the Muslim patients effectively, you will secure Paradise not only for yourself and your parents; after the war, my parents and I will also reward you generously” (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 86).

The young man was intelligent and ambitious. In response, he made one final request, commensurate with the importance of the task: that he be freed once his medical mission was complete. Neither the vizier’s authority nor the Dey’s position prevented him from asking openly for freedom. He said: “I promise you everything, my lord, and I shall not break my promise if you guarantee me the freedom for which I have long yearned” (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 86). He went to the barracks to treat the wounded, no longer marked as a physician-slave but simply as a physician. He did everything he could to save those who could be saved, completed his mission, and left for home aboard a French ship on 16 September 1830 (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 124).

Thus Simon Pfeiffer’s story of enslavement ended with his freedom, just as Turkish rule in Algeria came to an end and the country fell captive to French colonialism for more than 130 years.

Conclusion

Studying literary images of the Other broadens the horizons of writing, thought, and imagination. At the individual level, it enriches the personality and supports self-understanding. At the collective level, it may help channel suppressed emotions towards the Other, compensate for them, or justify social illusions embedded in a community. It can also expose distorted images of peoples, contribute to overcoming misunderstanding, and establish healthier relationships free from intellectual illusion and distortion—relationships that recognize the rights of both the Other and the Self.

Reading and analysing sections of Simon Pfeiffer’s memoirs suggests that he lived freely within captivity—or, more precisely, discovered a form of freedom in captivity that he had not expected. He lived among enslaved people of different nationalities and encountered Deys, viziers, and ordinary members of society. Yet he did not side with his fellow captives merely out of solidarity, nor flatter his masters in the hope of status or release. Instead, he remained a modest captive, fulfilled the duties imposed on him, and expressed gratitude for the food, bedding, and kind treatment he received—treatment that he did not always receive from his fellow captives. Perhaps this helped him accept his fate and hope for God’s mercy. However long his captivity lasted, and however dark the nights of patience became, he believed that God would deliver him from his

ordeal and enable him to become a fair-minded writer who conveyed what he had seen, heard, and felt, whether in relation to the Self or to the Other.

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