

Introduction

On 9 September 1553, Giovanni Battista Eliano, a twenty-three-year-old novice at the Collegio Romano, the Jesuit college in Rome, stepped out into the city with a number of his seminarian peers. The Collegio Romano was just a short walk from the ancient Roman Forum and not too far from the Jesuits' current liturgical hub, the Church of the Gesù. While we know Eliano's destination – Campo de' Fiori, one of the major open squares of early modern Rome – his route remains a mystery. This is partly due to the tortuous labyrinth of Rome's medieval streets that allows foot traffic to follow a variety of itineraries that intersect and overlap yet lead to any number of sites throughout the city's historic center known as the Campo Marzio, the Field of Mars. For first-time visitors and seasoned pros alike, the Campo Marzio is an easy place in which to get turned around, as the streets seem to pull one to nowhere, or – often enough – exactly where one started.

While we may never know how Eliano got to Campo de' Fiori, or what motivated him to take the route he did, or where he might have stopped along the way, we know exactly why he went there. It was Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and Eliano was off to participate in the burning of the Talmud, an ancient corpus of Jewish civil and ceremonial law central to rabbinical Judaism. The Roman Inquisition had ordered it be burned because of fears that the Talmud fomented obstinacy against papal efforts to convert the Jews.¹ The burning of the Talmud was part of a larger process to compel the Jews to either convert or accept their social

¹ Kenneth R. Stow, "The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, in Light of Sixteenth-Century Catholic Attitudes Toward the Talmud," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 34:3

ostracism. This came in a fuller form in 1555, when Pope Paul IV's bull *Cum nimis absurdum* established Rome's Jewish Ghetto, a stone's throw from both Campo de' Fiori and the Collegio Romano.²

For the city's Jews, all of this was surely reason for lament. But for Rome's Catholics, like Eliano and his peers, participating in or cheering on the burning of Jewish books meant proclaiming their role in the church's effort to safeguard its claim to universal truth in the face of its Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim rivals. It should not surprise anyone that young Jesuit novices like Eliano threw themselves headlong into the mob of people at Campo de' Fiori and pushed their way to the front of the crowd to ensure they got their hands on one of those heretical texts and personally saw to it that it found its way into the conflagration. We can imagine Eliano, a dutiful Jesuit in training, holding the text aloft and launching it into the pile that was to be ignited in a show of the Catholic Church's effort to purge resistance. Then, after a series of prayers and cheers as the embers once possessing Hebrew script floated into the late summer air, Eliano and his companions would have ambled back toward the Collegio Romano and continued on as if this were just one of many activities that made up their daily lives.

In the years that followed, Eliano continued his studies. He was ordained a Jesuit priest on 1 March 1561. Over the course of his career in the Society of Jesus, Eliano dedicated himself to many of the Jesuits' ministries: he taught Arabic and Hebrew; preached throughout the city; heard confessions from Eastern Christian pilgrims; and helped to open an Arabic and Syriac printing press. He also conducted missions to Egypt and Lebanon, which will make up the bulk of this book's narrative.

On the surface of things, the burning of the Talmud on 9 September 1553 was not a particularly significant or even rare event in early modern Rome, and it fits in well with Eliano's other activities as a Jesuit over the subsequent four decades of his life. Nevertheless, it is a microcosm of the conflictual nature of religious identity formation in the early modern Mediterranean that this book attempts to interrogate. And this

(September 1972): 435–49; Kenneth R. Stow, "The Papacy and the Jews: Catholic Reformation and Beyond," *Jewish History* 6:1/2 (January 1, 1992): 257–79.

² On Jewish conversion to Catholicism and the Ghetto in the early modern period, see David Berger, "*Cum Nimis Absurdum* and the Conversion of the Jews," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, 70:1 (July 1, 1979): 41–9; Kenneth R. Stow, *Theater of Acculturation: The Roman Ghetto in the Sixteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Kenneth R. Stow, *Jewish Life in Early Modern Rome: Challenge, Conversion, and Private Life* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

examination centers on Eliano, for there is more to the story here than tracing the career of an average Jesuit or in exploring his activities in Rome or missions to the Christian communities of the Eastern Mediterranean. This is because, as much as it was just one event of many in which the Catholic Church declared its position regarding the Jews, the burning of the Talmud on 9 September 1553 mattered more for Eliano than it did for the other Jesuit novices, and acts such as this would remain central to how Eliano constructed his Catholic identity. But why? For one, Eliano was fluent in Hebrew and Arabic. Second, before beginning his novitiate, Eliano had been all over the Mediterranean with his father and grandfather. Lastly, Eliano had had a rather intimate relationship with the Talmud since the tender age of seven. And this was because, unlike any of his companions who burned the Talmud that day and unlike any other member of the early modern Society of Jesus, Giovanni Battista Eliano was born a Jew.

Eliano's status as the only Jewish-born Jesuit and the decades he spent confronting that reality provide us with the opportunity to explore the ways in which one convert experienced and engaged with both the evolutions of his own identity as well as the larger fluctuations of religious culture in the early modern Mediterranean. The goal of this book is to trace Eliano's experience as a Jewish convert who became a Jesuit missionary with the hope of better understanding exactly what it was like to be a convert and what that experience tells us about the place of religious conversion in the early modern Mediterranean.

In particular, this book follows Eliano's lifelong struggle with his conversion to ask a series of questions about the nature of conversion as a lived experience. How did converts reconcile their religious pasts and religious presents to formulate a sense of belonging? How did their interactions with others and the acts they performed in everyday life inform their understanding of their converted selves?³ How did the entanglement of their pre- and post-conversion identities change over time because of the continual negotiations, shifting loyalties, and

³ Felicia Hughes-Freeland and Mary M. Crain, *Recasting Ritual: Performance, Media, Identity* (London: Routledge, 1998); Matthew Causey and Fintan Walsh, *Performance, Identity, and the Neo-Political Subject* (London: Routledge, 2013); Matt Tomlinson, *Ritual Textuality Pattern and Motion in Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Rachel Tsang and Eric Taylor Woods, *The Cultural Politics of Nationalism and Nation-Building: Ritual and Performance in the Forging of Nations* (London: Routledge, 2014); Matt Omasta and Drew Chappell, *Play, Performance, and Identity: How Institutions Structure Ludic Spaces* (London: Routledge, 2015).

ambiguous identities that pervaded the early modern Mediterranean?⁴ In essence, this book asks, how can we discern what it meant to be a convert through tracing the ways in which Eliano negotiated his Jewishness, what I define as the burden of his Jewish past and the impossibility of disentangling it from his own sense of his Catholic self? Furthermore, how did his confrontation with this religious past take place in a world where conversion was often doubted or equated with renegadism and crypto-religion?

This need to negotiate one's entangled pre- and post-conversion identities to prove one's sincerity is central to understanding conversion in the early modern Mediterranean. The answers to the questions I posed in the previous paragraph will help us better understand how converts attempted to prove their sincerity in a world where the most frequent accusation was that a conversion took place for reasons beyond faith.⁵ Eric Dursteler has declared the early modern period the "golden age of the renegade," with hundreds of thousands of individuals traversing religious boundaries for reasons beyond soteriology.⁶ Cultural chameleons such as the polymath Leo Africanus, the Moroccan Jew Samuel Pallache, the Venetian convert to Islam Beatrice Michiel, and many others all prove that people crisscrossed the fluid religious and cultural borders

⁴ This notion of ambiguous identities is in part informed by the work of Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, who jointly argue that identity is continuously constructed against an array of identities, both those of others as well as potential identities that individuals could claim, which are deeply entangled and cannot be sustained without the fictive existence of other constructed identities, hence rendering all identities ambiguous but nevertheless integral parts of human interaction. While their work focuses on the modern period, their insights into identity as a continuously constructed but nevertheless very real sense of the self suggest that humans experienced conflict in their efforts to make sense of their own experiences, which in turn shaped their sense of themselves and others. See their *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991).

⁵ Jeffrey S. Shoulson, *Fictions of Conversion: Jews, Christians, and Cultures of Change in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

⁶ Eric Dursteler, *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity, and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 111. Cf. Gino Benzoni, *Venezia e i turchi: scontri e confronti di due civiltà* (Milan: Electa, 1985); Pedro García Martín, Emilio Solá Castaño, and Germán Vázquez, *Renegados, viajeros y tránsfugas: comportamientos heterodoxos y de frontera en el siglo XVI* (Madrid: Fugaz, 2000); Emilio Solá Castaño, *Un Mediterráneo de piratas: corsarios, renegados y cautivos* (Madrid: Tecnos, 2004); Lucetta Scaraffia, *Rinnegati: per una storia dell'identità occidentale* (Rome: Laterza, 2002); Bartolomé Bennassar and Lucile Bennassar, *Les chrétiens d'Allah: l'histoire extraordinaire des renégats, XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Perrin, 2008); Valentina Oldrati, "Renegades and the Habsburg Secret Services in the Aftermath of Lepanto: Haci Murad and the Algerian Threat as a Case Study," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies* 24:1 (January 2, 2018): 7–26.

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of the Mediterranean for all sorts of reasons. And this in turn made life quite difficult for converts like Eliano.⁷ As we will see, such as when a Portuguese *converso* living as a Jew in Egypt conspired to have Eliano arrested, Eliano himself had to confront renegadism and crypto-Judaism in a very real way because of the impossibility of disentangling his Jewish past and conversion from his Catholic identity.⁸

It is also important, while attempting to answer the questions this book poses, to remember that Eliano lived not only in the golden age of the renegade, but also in a world of forced and coerced conversions of Muslims and Jews,⁹ as well as institutional attempts to ensure that those conversions were sincere and not simply the result of opportunism or pragmatism.¹⁰ As a former Jew, Eliano's life was colored by those tensions. Moreover, Eliano came of age in a post-Reformation Italy that

⁷ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006); Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Albert Wieggers, *A Man of Three Worlds: Samuel Pallache, a Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe*, trans. Martin Beagles (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Three Ways to Be Alien: Travails and Encounters in the Early Modern World* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011); Eric Dursteler, *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity, and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 1–33.

⁸ Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 5–8.

⁹ Norman Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002); François Soyier, *The Persecution of the Jews and Muslims of Portugal: King Manuel I and the End of Religious Tolerance (1496–7)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); José Pedro Paiva, “Vescovi ed ebrei/nuovi cristiani nel Cinquecento portoghese,” in *Riti di passaggio, storie di giustizia*, ed. Vincenzo Lavenia and Giovanna Paolin (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011), 67–85; Maria Filomena Lopes de Barros and José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim, “Cristãos(ãs)-Novos(as), Mouriscos(as), Judeus e Mouros. Diálogos em trânsito no Portugal moderno (séculos XVI–XVII),” *Journal of Sefardic Studies* 1 (2013): 1–45.

¹⁰ Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza: inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin: G. Einaudi, 1996); Michael Alpert, *Crypto-Judaism and the Spanish Inquisition* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Helen Rawlings, *The Spanish Inquisition* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006); Henry Charles Lea, *The Inquisition in the Spanish Dependencies: Sicily, Naples, Sardinia, Milan, the Canaries, Mexico, Peru, New Granada* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); David L. Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580–1700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Mercedes García-Arenal and Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, eds., *The Orient in Spain: Converted Muslims, the Forged Lead Books of Granada, and the Rise of Orientalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Elizabeth R. Wright, *The Epic of Juan Latino: Dilemmas of Race and Religion in Renaissance Spain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

saw conversion as central to promoting the church,¹¹ yet conversions needed to be monitored closely, lest the triumphalism of early modern missionary Catholicism break down.¹²

Eliano also lived at the edge of and traveled throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, which was dominated by the Ottomans.¹³ As a consequence, he operated in a world that believed that the allure of Islam posed a fundamental challenge to the very integrity of pure Christian society and would initiate the irreversible recalibration of the essence of Christians, what Eliano's contemporaries called "turning Turk."¹⁴ Europeans' fascination with and fear of this religious permeability led to mythical cults of the renegade, crypto-Jew, and Turk. European intellectual culture often centered on vilifying these religious others;¹⁵ at the same time, these

¹¹ Lance Lazar, *Working in the Vineyard of the Lord: Jesuit Confraternities in Early Modern Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Rosemary Lee, "Theologies of Failure: Islamic Conversion in Early Modern Rome," *Essays in History* (January 2012): 59–74; Peter Mazur, *Conversion to Catholicism in Early Modern Italy* (London: Routledge, 2016).

¹² E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects Between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 122–62. Pilar Huerga Criado, "Cristianos nuevos de origen ibérico en el Reino de Nápoles en el siglo XVII," *Sefarad* 72:2 (2012): 351–87; Gennaro Varriale, "Tra Il Mediterraneo e il fonte battesimale: Musulmani a Napoli nel XVI secolo," *Revista de historia moderna. Anales de la Universidad de Alicante* 31 (2013): 91–108; Pilar Huerga Criado, "La Inquisición romana en Nápoles contra los judaizantes, 1656–1659," *Monográfico* 6:9 (2017): 303–22.

¹³ Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Tobias Graf, *The Sultan's Renegades: Christian-European Converts to Islam and the Making of the Ottoman Elite, 1575–1610* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹⁴ Lucia Rostagno, *Mi faccio turco: esperienze ed immagini dell'Islam nell'Italia moderna* (Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente C.A. Nallino, 1983); Daniel J. Vitkus, "Turning Turk in Othello: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48:2 (July 1, 1997): 145–76; Mustafa Soykut, "The Development of the Image 'Turk' in Italy Through 'Della Letteratura de' Turchi' of Giambattista Donà," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 9:2 (November 1999): 175–203; Giovanni Ricci, *Ossessione turca: in una retrovia cristiana dell'Europa moderna* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2002); Daniel J. Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570–1630* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Gennaro Varriale, *Arrivano li turchi: guerra navale e spionaggio nel Mediterraneo (1532–1582)* (Novi Ligure: Città del silenzio, 2014).

¹⁵ Ottmar Hegyi, *Cervantes and the Turks: Historical Reality Versus Literary Fiction in La Gran Sultana and El Amante Liberal* (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 1992); Emilio Solá Castaño and José F. de la Peña, *Cervantes y la Berbería: (Cervantes, mundo turco-berberisco y servicios secretos en la época de Felipe II)* (Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996); Michèle Longino, *Orientalism in French Classical Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and*

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captivating figures spurred travel accounts¹⁶ and even plays that allowed individuals as far away as London to come face-to-face with “real life” renegades, crypto-Jews, Moors, and Turks.¹⁷

But there is something missing here – namely, how converts dealt with these pervasive anxieties. Eliano’s story will compel us to question to what extent renegadism, crypto-religion, and turning Turk presented problems for converts who were not shapeshifting, opportunistic renegades. In other words, what if we admitted that many converts were not dissimulators but were actually motivated to convert out of a sense of religiosity? Perhaps Eliano’s story will force us to rethink whether his conversion to Catholicism was more akin to those stemming from overseas missions, syncretic but nevertheless sincere, than it was those of crypto-Jews and renegades.¹⁸ Or, perhaps, Eliano’s life will allow for a richer understanding of the ways in which individuals and communities embraced new faiths or confronted those whose strong convictions

West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Marina Formica, *Lo specchio turco: immagini dell’altro e riflessi del sé nella cultura italiana d’età moderna* (Rome: Donzelli, 2012); Jo Ann Cavallo, *The World beyond Europe in the Romance Epics of Boiardo and Ariosto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

¹⁶ Gerald MacLean, *Looking East: English Writing and the Ottoman Empire Before 1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Goran V. Stanivukovic, ed., *Remapping the Mediterranean World in Early Modern English Writings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Matthew Dimmock, *Mythologies of the Prophet Muhammad in Early Modern English Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹⁷ Daniel J. Vitkus, ed., *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England: Selimus, A Christian Turned Turk, and The Renegado* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Daniel J. Vitkus, ed., *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Linda McJannet, *The Sultan Speaks: Dialogue in English Plays and Histories about the Ottoman Turks* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Janet Adelman, *Blood Relations: Christian and Jew in the Merchant of Venice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Ian Smith, *Race and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: Barbarian Errors* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Robert Henke and Eric Nicholson, eds., *Transnational Mobilities in Early Modern Theater* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016).

¹⁸ Louise M Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahuatl-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989); Dominique Deslandres, *Croire et faire croire: les missions françaises au XVIIe siècle (1600–1650)* (Paris: Fayard, 2003); Osvaldo F. Pardo, *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism: Nahuatl Rituals and Christian Sacraments in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006); Mark Z. Christensen, *Translated Christianities: Nahuatl and Maya Religious Texts* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014); Cécile Fromont, *The Art of Conversion: Christian Visual Culture in the Kingdom of Kongo* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

contrasted their own.¹⁹ Eliano's experiences, such as a Jesuit washing a Jewish Eliano's feet, should lead us to probe further the larger nexus of motivations beyond pragmatism for why individuals converted, as well as to unpack individuals' efforts to recalibrate the meaning of their beliefs in their confrontations with others.²⁰ While it is difficult, if not impossible, to prove the veracity of belief and its relationship to individuals' consciousness and sense of belonging in society, this book heeds Lewis Rambo's reminder that "we must take the religious sphere seriously" if we are ever to get a full picture of the nature of conversion in the early modern Mediterranean.²¹

Likewise, the fact that Eliano lived in the golden age of the renegade allows us to pose questions about the intersection of internal belief on one hand and the very public nature of religious self-representation on the other. For example, to what extent were Eliano's lifelong attempts to reconcile his Jewishness and Catholicness a vertiginous experience in which his internal sense of himself was destabilized by his continual need to come to grips with the reality of his Jewish past in everyday life? How did this inform the ways in which he embarked on a new religious future with its own system of ideas, signs, and methods of belonging, especially since he could not simply erase his religious past?²² How did

¹⁹ Eric Zimmer, "Jewish and Christian Hebraist Collaboration in Sixteenth Century Germany," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, 71:2 (October 1, 1980): 69–88; Gregory Hanlon, *Confession and Community in Seventeenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993); R. Po-chia Hsia and Hartmut Lehmann, eds., *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Ole Peter Grell and R. W. Scribner, eds., *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Keith P. Luria, "Separated by Death? Burials, Cemeteries, and Confessional Boundaries in Seventeenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 24:2 (Spring 2001): 185–222; Keith P. Luria, *Sacred Boundaries: Religious Coexistence and Conflict in Early-Modern France* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005); Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

²⁰ Simon Ditchfield and Helen Smith, eds., *Conversions: Gender and Religious Change in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

²¹ Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 10–11.

²² Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 87–125. Cf. Richard Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1980); Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

the boundaries between the reality of his conversion as he experienced it and the ways in which he was expected to present it to others blur? How did Eliano craft a conversion narrative that allowed him to prove to others that he was not a crypto-Jew? How did he eliminate the spiritual dizziness that overcomes the convert in the effort to find meaning?²³ In other words, this book attempts to explore how converts lived in a world in which renegadism and crypto-religion created anxieties about religious disintegration. It likewise analyzes how they embarked on what Henri Paul Pierre Gooren has called a “conversion career,” a lifelong, evolving process by which converts could outwardly confirm their inward sense of belonging in a new religious group to those with whom they interacted.²⁴ By looking at what convinced Eliano to convert as well as how he grappled with the legacy of his Jewishness over the course of his lifetime, this book illuminates what the very subjective and personal nature of spiritual conversion looked like when it was performed in the theater of everyday life.

It also examines the ways in which individuals constructed a narrative of their conversions both for themselves and for others. The study of conversion narratives is hardly new. But most conversion narratives, as useful as they are, provide information about the convert’s worldview when the text was written, not necessarily what the convert had experienced in the past or over the course of the convert’s larger life experience.²⁵ Likewise, inquisitorial records – often a major source for the voices of converts accused of apostasy or crypto-religion – were written by inquisitors. They are also quite episodic, that is to say, individuals usually appeared before the Inquisition once or twice, and were never heard from again. Even Carlo Ginzburg’s famous Menocchio is a shadowy figure whose voice appears only in fits and starts throughout the story, and always through the filter of his inquisitorial adversaries.²⁶

²³ Massimo Leone, *Religious Conversion and Identity: The Semiotic Analysis of Texts* (London: Routledge, 2004), x–xiii. Quote is from p. xii. Cf. Henri Paul Pierre Gooren, *Religious Conversion and Disaffiliation: Tracing Patterns of Change in Faith Practices* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 43–52.

²⁴ Henri Paul Pierre Gooren, *Religious Conversion and Disaffiliation: Tracing Patterns of Change in Faith Practices* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

²⁵ Peter Mazur and Abigail Shinn, eds., “Conversion Narratives in the Early Modern World,” special edition of *Journal of Early Modern History* 17:5–6 (2013): 427–595.

²⁶ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

While useful in the aggregate, conversion narratives and inquisitorial records are limited in their use for constructing individual converts' life histories. Eliano, however, is different. He traveled throughout the Eastern Mediterranean both before and after his conversion; he produced volumes of letters and missionary reports detailing his efforts with the Christians of the Ottoman Empire; and he wrote an autobiography a year before his death. The variety and chronological scope of his writings allow us to take a new direction in the study of conversion in the early modern Mediterranean. By looking at Eliano's conversion narrative not as a single text but as a textual corpus, how he experienced his conversion in the moment as well as over the course of his lifetime will come into focus.

By moving beyond the episodic and fragmentary reconstructions of the conversionary experience toward a lifelong exploration of it through Eliano's career as a Jesuit missionary, this book aims to accomplish two goals regarding our understanding of conversion in the early modern Mediterranean. First, it illuminates the ways that a seemingly sincere convert confronted a world of doubt, renegadism, cross-cultural anxiety, and crypto-religion.²⁷ In turn, Eliano's experiences and reflections elucidate that converts had to come to terms with the place of their religious pasts in their lives if they were ever to settle their religious identities for themselves as well as for those who doubted them. Second, by tracing Eliano's experiences as he described them in the moment and over the course of his lifetime, his conversion becomes more than simply an act that was carried out or even something that was intermittently contemplated over time. Rather, Eliano's conversion will be discussed in the pages that follow as a fundamental reorientation and redefinition of the self. It was both an intimate experience in the moment as well as a process of integration that continued to recur and evolve through Eliano's confrontations with others.²⁸

This book examines Eliano's conversion as neither a single act nor a spasmodic reminder that he was different; rather, reading Eliano's disparate writings as a cohesive conversion narrative suggests that conversion

²⁷ I qualify Eliano's conversion because it is of course impossible to fully know to what extent his conversion was sincere. That said, because Eliano spent nearly forty years in the Society of Jesus, a religious order known for its intellectual and spiritual rigor, it seems highly unlikely that Eliano was simply passing himself off as a sincere convert.

²⁸ Diane Austin-Brooks, "The Anthropology of Conversion: An Introduction" in *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*, ed. Andrew Buckser and Stephen D. Glazier (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 1–12.