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Body and Soul:  
Turning Turk in Early Modern Barbary Captivity Narratives  

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A thesis submitted to  
the National University of Ireland Galway  
in fulfilment of the  
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Abstract
This thesis focuses on early modern Barbary captivity narratives which describe Christian encounters with the Islamic world, and gives particular attention to questions of sexuality and gender. From the short fledgling narratives written in the late sixteenth century to the more detailed accounts of the seventeenth century and extending the chronological framework to incorporate the first Barbary captivity narrative written by a woman in 1769 the thesis investigates the differences between male and female experiences of captivity and conversion, and in the public articulation of those experiences. It examines the complex relationship between truth and fiction in the narratives and how it changes over time. It looks at how early modern identity was articulated in print, how it might be transformed and what was at stake in that transformation. It investigates how conversion to Islam, known colloquially as ‘turning Turk’, was imagined and highlights the role of equivocation in conversion. I suggest that turning Turk was conceived not only as a spiritual conversion but as a physical transformation with sexual overtones. In the popular imagination, conversion to Islam damned the Christian soul and contaminated the body with permanent marks like circumcision and irreversible acts like sodomy and, for women captives, the loss of virginity.

Chapter one provides an overview of how Islam was imagined and considers the pervasive fear that Muslims were intent on converting the whole world to ‘Turcism’, not only with their military strength but with the allure of their faith. The second chapter examines the cultural preoccupation with circumcision. The act of changing faith was confounded by an element of mystery surrounding the sexual dimension of circumcision. It was associated with emasculation, sexual violation or becoming a eunuch. Chapter three probes this association and examines how allegations of sodomy and sexual deviance attached to captives and renegades. Captivity narratives reveal anxieties about the penetration and defilement of Christian men by Muslim sodomites. Chapters four and five concentrate on women and maintain the focus on issues of sexuality. The temptation to forsake one’s religion and embrace Islam was embodied by exaggerated images of irresistible harem women. Simultaneously, reports of chaste Christian virgins enslaved in harems and forced to convert by lustful masters were widespread. Chapter five explores the experience of female captivity by analysing the narrative of Elizabeth Marsh, the first Barbary captivity narrative written by a woman captive in the period.
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Introduction

During the Elizabethan period the English travelled to the Barbary States of North Africa for trade, employment and diplomatic exchange. Alongside this commercial and consular activity, Christians and Muslims engaged in piracy, privateering and corsairing.¹ The area known as Barbary, whose name derived from the indigenous Berber population, comprised the Ottoman regencies of Tripoli, Tunisia and Algeria and the independent kingdom of Morocco.² Algeria, with its fortified capital city Algiers, was militarily the strongest. In the early seventeenth century, Salé, on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, host to disgruntled Moriscos and opportunistic Christian renegades developed into a ‘republic of privateers’ with a well-armed fort and over forty ships.³ Robert C. Davis points out that these unique semi-states pursued their own course of self-enrichment ‘neither completely independent of Turkish control’ nor anywhere near as closely tied to Ottoman influence as were areas further east.⁴ Nabil Matar notes that the English had more commercial, political and maritime dealings with the Barbary States than with any other part of the Islamic world.⁵ Treaties were periodically ratified with the North African regencies, appointing consuls to secure trade, ensure the safe passage of English ships and negotiate the


⁵ Nabil Matar, *Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2005), p. 4. England established diplomatic and commercial relations with the Ottoman Empire in the late 1570s. A hundred years later this trade had declined and by the 1730s the threat to English shipping had waned.
release of captives. However, the relationship was tentative, volatile and fluctuating. This study will focus on early modern captivity narratives which describe Christian encounters with the Islamic world in the Barbary States. My aim is to examine the way in which captivity narratives portrayed conversion to Islam and to concentrate on the information, prejudices and beliefs that were circulated and presented as ‘factual’ by former captives. In particular I will investigate the practice of ‘turning Turk’ and suggest that it was conceived not only as a spiritual conversion but as a physical transformation with sexual connotations. To ‘turn Turk’ was to shun Christianity and embrace Islam. It involved several identity altering acts, including verbally denouncing one’s faith, receiving a new name, and donning foreign clothing. In the popular imagination Islam not only damned the Christian soul but contaminated and penetrated the body with permanent marks like circumcision and irreversible acts like sexual intercourse, and, for women, the loss of virginity.

Nabil Matar suggests that Christians’ contact with Muslims was problematic and threatening because ‘it was the only encounter with non-European people who not only enslaved them but tempted them away from their history and religion’. 

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6 The capture and enslavement of European Christians was an ongoing occurrence throughout the medieval and early modern periods. See for example Johannes Schiltberger, The Bondage and Travels of Johann Schiltberger, a Native of Bavaria, in Europe, Asia, and Africa, 1396-1427, ed. by Karl Fridrich Neumann, trans by J. Buchan Telfer (London: Hakluyt Society, 1879); George of Hungary, Tractatus de Moribus Condicionibus et Negucia Turcorum (c. 1480); Bartholomej Georgijevic, De Turcarum Ritu et Caeremoniis (1544); in 1575 Miguel de Cervantes and his brother Rodrigo were captured by Algerian corsairs and held for sixty-one months. Cervantes drew on his captivity in his plays Life in Algiers and Dungeons of Algiers. Barbary captivity also features in Don Quixote (1605), and in several of his poems. Captivity was a popular feature of early modern drama in plays such as Robert Greene’s Selimus, Emperor of the Turks (1594); Robert Daborne’s A Christian Turned Turk (1612) and Philip Massinger’s The Renegado (1623). See Three Turks Plays from Early Modern England: Selimus, A Christian Turned Turk, and The Renegado, ed. by Daniel J. Vitkus (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

7 In this context ‘turning Turk’ means conversion to Islam. For alternate meanings of ‘turning Turk in early modern England see Warner G. Rice, ‘To Turn Turk’, Modern Language Notes, 46 (March, 1931), 153-54; In her article ‘Barbers and Barbary: Early Modern Cultural Semantics’, Renaissance Drama 33, (2004), 201-44, Patricia Parker states that ‘Barbarie pidgeon and turning Turk were well-worn terms for harlot […] while the brothel areas on the south side of the Thames were known as the coast of Barbary or the Turkish shore’, Parker, ‘Barbers and Barbary: Early Modern Cultural Semantics’, Renaissance Drama, 33 (2004), 201-44 (204); See also Daniel J. Vitkus, Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630 (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), pp. 88-89.

8 Nabil Matar, ‘The Traveller as Captive: The Allure of Islam in Renaissance England’, Literature Interpretation Theory, 7 (1996), 187-96 (pp. 194-5). While it can be argued that in New England some settlers (usually women and children) captured by Native Americans were tempted to remain with their captors, this was never widely considered to be a serious threat. See for example James E. Seaver, A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison, 4th edn (Canadaguia, 1824; New York: Miller, Orton and Mulligan, 1856); James Axtell, The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981). American Indian captivity narratives flourished from the late seventeenth century to the nineteenth century.
Gerald MacLean and Matar claim that ‘only in the Mediterranean was captivity inextricably linked to conversion’.\(^9\) English weakness or susceptibility to foreign influence was personified in the act of ‘turning Turk’ which represented everything that was feared about foreign travel and cultural contamination.\(^10\) Of course this invites us to consider how the term Turk was understood. In the early modern period European writers referred to the rulers of the Ottoman Empire and their subjects as Turks, without distinguishing between the various Turkic groups throughout Asia. They wrongly assumed that the Turks belonged to a ‘single genetic race whose history could be traced back across the centuries to a genesis in remote antiquity’.\(^11\) MacLean suggests that Turk could refer to any Muslim but was also ‘pejoratively applied to anyone who portrayed contradictory or violent or tyrannically patriarchal characteristics’.\(^12\) A 1657 rhyming dictionary gives a list of definitions for ‘Turke’:

Unbelieving, misbelieving, thrifty, abstemious, cruel, unpitying, merciless, unrelenting, inexorable, warlick, circumcized, superstitious, bloody, wine-forbearing, turban'd, covetous, avaritious, erring.\(^13\)

A Christian who ‘turned’ acquired all the stereotypical negative characteristics attributed to the Turks – cruelty, violence, mercilessness, licentiousness, laziness – qualities antithetical to Christian virtue.\(^14\) Turning Turk, abandoning Christianity and embracing Islam were considered an abhorrent, irrational and unnatural transgression.

This introduction aims to locate the study in its temporal, historical and critical contexts. A generally agreed starting point for the early modern era is the 1450s when the printing press was invented in Germany; the voyages of discovery brought wealth to European powers and the Ottomans conquered Constantinople. The French Revolution in 1789 is considered the cut-off point. This epoch witnessed the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment as well as the rise of capitalism and the emergence of the nation-state. In English studies, longstanding,

\(^10\) In India Christians were usually said to ‘turn Moor’ but both terms, i.e. Moor and Turk, could be used interchangeably.
\(^14\) In the anonymous text *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (London, 1597) a ‘Turke’ is defined as being ‘one that is accursed and a vagabond’, 7r.
if somewhat arbitrary, period distinctions tend to separate the Renaissance from the eighteenth century. The English literary Renaissance from 1500 to 1660 is subdivided into the Elizabethan Age, the Jacobean Age, the Caroline Age and the Commonwealth period. The Neoclassical Period from 1660 to 1785 includes the Restoration, the Augustan Age and the Age of Sensibility.

The ethos of the early modern period was predominately religious with peoples’ lives being governed by religious teachings. From the Henrician Reformation of the 1530s to the Civil Wars of the mid-seventeenth century, England had become predominately Protestant but its religious tableau remained quite diverse.\(^\text{15}\) There were divisions between conformists and nonconformists, Calvinists and Arminians. Europe did not enjoy shared Christian unity and was fraught with internal religious conflict between Catholic and Protestant confessions. During the seventeenth century inquisitiveness and curiosity lost their sinful connotations and became spurs in the quest for knowledge. A new scientific worldview emerged leading to the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century.

The chronological boundaries of the study span the late sixteenth century, which witnessed the emergence of the earliest English Barbary captivity narratives, to 1769 when the first Barbary captivity narrative written by an English woman was published.\(^\text{16}\) This sweeping historical trajectory follows the course of England’s rise from relative insignificance in the sixteenth century to its emergence and flourishing as an imperial power with its own developing empire in the eighteenth century. Jonathan Burton describes the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century as ‘an era of trafficking, when piracy, diplomacy and mercantilism’ changed the dynamics of the English encounter with the Ottoman Empire.\(^\text{17}\) During her reign Elizabeth I forged strategic trade and military alliances with the Islamic world leading to the formation of the Turkey Company in 1581, the Barbary Company in 1585 and the


\(^{\text{16}}\) Joe Snader includes a comprehensive bibliography of English and American captivity narratives both factual and fictional in *Caught between Worlds: British Captivity Narratives in Fact and Fiction* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000); In Piracy, Slavery and Redemption ( 2001) Daniel J. Vitkus includes a bibliography of sixteenth and seventeenth century English captivity narratives.

East India Company in 1600. Her successor, James I, harboured anti-Islamic sentiments but realized it was not in England’s interest to sever commercial links with the Ottomans and in 1605 issued a charter to ensure the continuance of the Levant Company. At this stage England was not an imperial power but was a ‘supplicant to Islamic polities’ whose wealth, might and political power it could only envy. During the seventeenth century England was wracked with unrest, war and political change. The English Civil War (1641-1649) culminated in the beheading of Charles I and the formation of the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell. The collapse of the Commonwealth was followed by the Restoration of Charles II. In 1661, following the marriage of Charles II to Catherine of Braganza, the English crown acquired the Portuguese garrison on Tangier. The short lived reign of James II was overthrown in 1688 by the Glorious Revolution which saw the passing of the English throne to his daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange. Despite domestic turmoil England prospered overseas and thrived economically, acquiring lands and capital and emerging at the fin de siècle as an imperial power. By the first decades of the eighteenth century Britain ruled a vast empire. As a result of this new-found military and political confidence Turks and Moors no longer inspired such fear for the English. From this period onwards, as Rana Kabbani suggests, hostility was replaced with a fascinated distrust.

Between 1577 and 1739 there were twenty-eight extant narratives written by Englishmen who were held in captivity in Barbary. Such was the appetite for tales of Barbary captivity that several European accounts were translated into English. I

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18 Discourse with the Ottomans was initiated in 1575 by merchants Richard Staper and Edward Osborne which resulted in William Harborne’s appointment as ambassador to the sultan, in 1578. See S.A. Skilliter, William Harborne and the Trade with Turkey, 1578-1582: A Documentary Study of the First Anglo-Ottoman Relations (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). The Turkey Company was renamed the Levant Company in 1592.
21 Catherine was the daughter of King John IV of Portugal. Due to the high cost of maintaining and defending the garrison at Tangier Charles II ordered the evacuation and destruction of the town in 1683. As part of Catherine’s dowry the English also acquired Bombay.
22 England established settlements in Ireland, North America, the West Indies and the Indian subcontinent.
24 See for example Bartolomej Georgijevic, The Offspring of the House of Ottomanno, Englishd by Hugh Gough (London, 1569); Emanuel D’Aranda, The History of Algiers and its slavery with many remarkable particularities of Africk: Written by the Sieur Emanuel D’Aranda, sometime a slave there; English’d by John Davies (London, 1666); Lewis Marott, A Narrative of the Adventures of Lewis Marott, pilot-royal of the galleys of France. Giving an Account of his slavery under the Turks.
will consider them here as part of English discourse on the Turk. I have selected captivity narratives that incorporate detailed commentary on aspects of Ottoman and Islamic culture such as religious rites, sexual mores, deviance and gender. The study is complemented by discussion of contemporary first-hand accounts from travellers, diplomats and clergymen. As the terms Turk and Moor were used interchangeably in the early modern period to refer to the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire and the Barbary States, I retain their usage here. I have used English rather than British throughout as the majority of texts examined in this study were written or translated into English before the Act of Union of 1707. My research will aim to provide a greater understanding of the way in which early modern English people perceived themselves in relation to ‘Turks’, ‘Moors’ and the Ottoman Empire.  

**Barbary Captive Taking**

The Muslims that early modern English travellers encountered belonged primarily to the Mediterranean littoral, a vast area stretching from Istanbul, the hub of the Ottoman Empire, to the Barbary States of North Africa and incorporating major cities such as Jerusalem, Cairo, Aleppo, Algiers, Tangiers and Meknes. MacLean and Matar point out that early modern travellers, diplomats and scholars did not always conceive of a generalized or homogenous Muslim or Islamic world. In the complex melting pot of Mediterranean cultural activity the English discovered a fusion of cultures, creeds and colours where familiar mores and beliefs were challenged and critiqued. Within this Empire lived Christians, Jews and people of other faiths. Religious rituals, cultural customs, gender roles and sexual practices were all commented on by curious and awestruck travellers. Most portrayed the lands they visited as permeated by despotism, oppression, deviance and degradation. However some commentators noted the favourable interaction and

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(London, 1677); and Germain Moüette, *The travels of the Sieur Mouette, in the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco, during his eleven years captivity in those parts* (London, 1710).

23 The Ottoman Empire, named after its first leader Osman Gazi, came to prominence c. 1300. In 1453 under Sultan Mehmed II the Ottomans conquered Constantinople. The Empire reached its pinnacle under Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent between 1520 and 1566.

24 The term Barbary was used by Europeans to refer to the Berber lands of North Africa.


27 The Qur’an advocated toleration of other faiths. Christian states expelled ethnic or religious minorities.

28 Some travellers, such as Henry Blount, suggested that native Christians were deprived by the Ottomans of their churches and religious instruction.
social harmony that existed among the different faiths. This religious tolerance contradicted the common belief that Islam was a threat to Christianity and that Muslims were obliged to convert Christians. In the mid-sixteenth century the Basel professor Sebastian Münster remarked that ‘many and diverse sects of people are found amongst the Turkes, all which do reverence and honour God after their peculiar rites and customes’.  

Later accounts record that in some areas, priests, pastors and rabbis were allowed freedom to preach and worship in their own churches, chapels and synagogues. The captive William Okeley revealed how in Algiers, in the mid-seventeenth century, he and ‘three or fourscore’ captives were allowed to meet three times a week in a cellar to enjoy the ministry of Rev. Devereux Sprat. Okeley stated that although they congregated next to the street they were not disturbed by the Turks or Moors, ‘for whilst we intermeddled not with their superstitions […] we might without any disturbance from them worship our God according to our consciences’. A publication by Richard Blome (d. 1705), a well known publisher and cartographer, included a short account entitled The Present State of Algiers which commented on the religious tolerance afforded to Christian slaves. He suggested that they were allowed to say and hear Mass daily in a place allowed for the service. English, German and Dutch Protestants were allowed to preach and pray in the English consul’s house. By the standards of the period religious toleration was more generous within the Ottoman Empire than in Christian Europe. Nevertheless nervous observers unable to connect this toleration with the threat of the Ottomans emphasized that Christians under Muslim rule suffered tyranny and cruelty and for those held captive there was pressure to convert.


33 William Okeley, Ebenezer: or a Small Monument of Great Mercy, Appearing in the Miraculous Deliverance of William Okeley, Willliam Adams, John Anthony, John Jephs, John ___ Carpenter from the Miserable Slavery of Algiers (London, 1675), p. 24. The surname of John, a carpenter, has been left out in the narrative and he is only referred to by his trade. See Vitkus, Piracy, Slavery and Redemption, p. 127, note 2. This work was reprinted in 1676, with a second edition in 1684 and a third in 1764. The second edition contained an appendix ‘A Further Narrative of James Deane and Others’. After his ship was captured by Algerian pirates in 1679, Deane was enslaved for two and a half years, before being ransomed.

34 Richard Blome, A Description of the Island of Jamaica, with the isles and territories in America to which the English are related ... Together with the Present State of Algiers (London, 1678), p. 7.
The various ethnic groups who practised the Islamic faith were referred to by early modern travellers under the interchangeable terms ‘Turks’\(^{35}\), ‘Moors’\(^{36}\) and Ottomans. Matthew Dimmock argues that the variety of meanings applied to the word ‘Turk’ in the early modern period calls into question any dominant, defining conception of otherness.\(^{37}\) Nabil Matar points to the shift in the representation of Moors and Turks between the beginning and end of the seventeenth century. In the earlier period the Barbary world was intimidating and unfamiliar which fuelled the imagination, leading to the creation of the ‘multifacetated, sometimes humorous but also intimidating figures of the Elizabethan stage’.\(^{38}\) From the second half of the seventeenth century England became a formidable and dominant naval power. Turks and Moors were no longer as threatening, and in dramatic productions became objects of invention, fantasy and entertainment. Writing in the late seventeenth century, Thomas Smith (1638-1710), chaplain to the English ambassador in Istanbul, Sir Daniel Harvey, noted that the Ottomans considered it an insult to be called ‘Turks’ by Christians:

> For the old name Turk is altogether laid aside and despised by them, as ominous and of an evil sound, as if an alteration of condition had made them quite another Nation, and they seem desirous to forget it, and therefore never mention it themselves, and take it amiss and are very angry and look upon it as an affront if any Christian call them by it.\(^{39}\)

\(^{35}\) The OED defines ‘Turk’ as ‘formerly, a member of the dominant race of the Ottoman empire; sometimes extended to any subject of the Grand Turk or Turkish Sultan, but usually restricted to Muslims; in earlier times, a Seljuk; from 1300, an Osmani or Ottoman; one who, or considered himself, a descendant of the Osmanlis or other Turks’. Bernard Lewis suggests that there was a determination amongst Western travellers to refer to Muslims by ethnic names in order to detract and diminish their religious stature, *Islam and the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 7.

\(^{36}\) In 711 a Berber army, led by the Arab governor of Tangier, Tariq ibn Ziyad, invaded Gibraltar and killed Roderic, last king of the Visigoths. These Berbers became known in Europe as Mauri, or Moors. See Anthony Pagden, *Worlds at War: The 2,500 Year Struggle between East and West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 149. They called their new territory, comprising Gibraltar, Spain and Portugal, Al-Andalus. Ferdinand and Isabella expelled the Moors from Granada in 1502. A century later, Philip II expelled the Moriscos. These disgruntled exiles settled in the Barbary States. In his translation of Leo Africanus (c. 1494-c. 1554), John Pory observed that there were two types of Moors: ‘white or tawnie Moores, and negros or blacke Moores’, *A Geographical Historie of Africa, Written in Arabeicke and Italian by John Leo, a More* (London, 1600), p. 6. The term Moor which originally identified all the inhabitants of North Africa, came to denote specifically Muslims and was ethnographically vague. The Muslims of the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia were also frequently described as Moors.


\(^{38}\) See Matar, *Britain and Barbary*, pp. 7-11.

Smith added that they desired to be known as ‘Musulman, which Religion bestows on them’.\footnote{Smith, p. 25.}

Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts reveal the coexistence of ‘multiple, diversified and incoherent images of the Turks’ and suggest that early modern perceptions of the Ottoman Empire were both varied and complex.\footnote{Asli Çirakman, \textit{From the “Terror of the World” to the “Sick Man of Europe”: European Images of Ottoman Empire and Society from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth} (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 37.} Burton argues that the images of the Ottomans produced by English authors ranged from ‘the censorious to the laudatory, from others to brothers’.\footnote{Burton, \textit{Traffic and Turning}, p. 12.} On the one hand travellers marvelled at the splendid luxury, stable social order, warm hospitality, immaculate cleanliness and mysterious sensuality of the Ottoman world.\footnote{Ibid., p. 38.} On the other, Muslims were considered infidels, barbarians, sodomites and sexual deviants.\footnote{Travellers linked the alleged sexual excesses of the Turks with those of the Moors who were considered to be naturally promiscuous. See Vitkus, \textit{Three Turks Plays}, p. 15.} In particular the Barbary States of North Africa were perceived negatively and described in derogatory terms. A seventeenth-century depiction included by Samuel Purchas (c.1577-1626) in \textit{Purchas his Pilgrimes} (1625) reveals that the region was imagined as

the whip of the Christian World, the wall of the Barbarian, terror of Europe, [...] Scourge of the lands, Den of Pyrates, Theatre of all crueltie, and Sanctuarie of Iniquitie.\footnote{Samuel Purchas, ‘Collections out of the Voyages and Historie of Friar Joao dos Sanctos his Aethiopia Orientalis and Varia Historia …’ in \textit{Purchas His Pilgrimes in five bookes} (London, 1625), vol. II, pp. 1535-67 (p. 1565).}

From the harbours of Salé, Algiers and Tunis, Barbary corsairs threatened shipping and jeopardized English trade as they menaced the Mediterranean, plundering, pillaging and taking captives. A petition of 2 September 1636 by merchants and owners of ships in the southern ports of England clearly illustrates the seriousness of the problem:

The pirates of Sallee are become so numerous, strong and nimble in their ships and are so well piloted into these channels by English and Irish captives (of whom they retain almost 2000 in slavery), that both these channels are so full of them that petitioners dare not send their ships and goods to sea, seamen refuse to go, and fishermen refrain to take fish, whereby customs and imports are lessened, merchandising is at a stand, petitioners are much impoverished and many of them utterly undone. Pray that speedy course may

Even Europeans who remained at home could fall victim to raiding pirates. There were several instances in the early seventeenth century of Barbary corsairs coming ashore and capturing unsuspecting victims. North African pirates had reached the Thames channel in 1616 and 1617. Several hundred people were abducted along the English, Welsh and Irish coastline between 1625 and 1640. The Anglican clergyman Charles Fitzgeffry (c.1575-1638) warned of the danger of being attacked at home and vented his anger against Christian renegades who assisted in the raids:

And art thou sure if thou adventurest not thy selfe on Sea to be safe on land? Though thou com’st not neare the Turkes may not they come too neare thee? […] We might have beene surprised by them while we are sleeping on our beds. See not how audacious they are grown? How their shalops brave us at our harbours mouthes? And who were those but some of our owne nation turned Turkes, threatening to bring us unto their owne condition […] Can we forget that Tragicall transportation of brethern from Baltamore\footnote{In 1631, the village of Baltimore in County Cork was attacked and one hundred and seven villagers were taken captive and enslaved in North Africa. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.} into that Babilon, Barbary? All of them English, most of them Cornish, suddenly surprised in the silence of the night.\footnote{Charles Fitzgeffry, Compassion Towards Captives, Chiefly Towards our Brethren and Countrymen Who are in Miserable Bondage in Barbary (Oxford, 1637), p. 46. Fitzgeffry, born in Cornwall, was a Church of England clergyman and poet. See the ODNB. Earlier, in 1575, another clergyman, Thomas Newton, had warned of the threat posed by the ‘pestilent Generation’ who ‘were (indeede) at the first very far of from our Clyme & Religion, and therefore the lesse to be feared, but now they are even at our doores and ready to come into our Houses’, A Notable Historie of the Saracens (London, 1575), Dedication, A1v.}

The concerns expressed by Fitzgeffry would have been accepted by his congregation as both tangible and imminent.\footnote{See Mark Netzloff, England’s Internal Colonies: Class, Capital, and the Literature of Early Modern English Colonialism (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 78. See also Vitkus, Turning Turk.} The modus operandi of the attackers was usually the same. Striking at dawn when the villagers were asleep they had the advantage of the element of surprise coupled with inside knowledge of harbours, towns and defences. The unprepared inhabitants would have been easy targets, unable to withstand the sudden onslaught. These raids revealed the vulnerability of Christians to attack not only by infidel forces but by Christians who had abandoned their nation
Barbary, the ‘hel-mouth’ and ‘Throne of Pyracie’, was seen as a safe haven for degenerates and the ‘Receptacle of Renegadoes to God, and Traytors to their Countrey’. Slavery was a vital component of the economy of the Barbary region, supplying domestic labourers, manpower for the galleys and providing lucrative ransom. Sailors, merchants, soldiers, army personnel, exiles and convicts were captured and sold at North African slave-markets. Establishing exact numbers of captives is difficult and has sparked numerous debates. The study of North Africa and the Mediterranean has been overshadowed by events since 11 September 2001 in New York and the rise of a radical form of Islam. This is the genesis of the contentious dispute over numbers of captives. Analogies have been made between Barbary captivity and recent events in the Middle East, modern terrorism and with the Somali pirates. Keeping numbers high demonizes Muslims, ignores equivalent Christian corsairing, validates the sub-Saharan slave trade and justifies conquest and colonisation. Davis suggests that the demand for slaves was highest between the 1580s and 1640s, when 10,000 to 15,000 slaves would have been required to man the galleys. The transition to sails at the end of the seventeenth century would have lessened the demand. David Hebb estimates that between 1616 and 1642 English losses to Barbary corsairs totalled approximately 400 ships and over 8,000 people. Linda Colley suggests that there were at least 20,000 English and Irish captives in North Africa between the seventeenth century and the mid-eighteenth century. While concentrating on French sources Gillian Weiss has compiled a comprehensive list showing the estimated numbers of Christian captives in Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli

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50 Netzloff, p. 87.  
51 Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625), vol. II, p. 873. Pierre Dan, a seventeenth-century French Redemptionist priest, suggested that there were approximately 14,000 renegades in Barbary in the 1630s. Davis, p. 21. See Dan, *Histoire de la Barbarie et ses Corsaires* (Paris, 1649). Dan was superior in the convent of the Trinitarians at Fontainebleau and was in Algiers part of the decade 1630-40. Although Dan’s work is of considerable historical value it was written to gain support for the redemption of captives.  
55 Colley, *Captives*, p. 56.
and Morocco between 1530 and 1830. Davis calculates that between 1530 and 1780 there were possibly a million, or up to a million and a quarter European Christians enslaved in Barbary. He suggests that there were as many as 35,000 slaves in Barbary at any given time between the years 1580 and 1680. Peter Earle questions Davis’s methodology and suggests that his figures may be exaggerated. In his recent book *British Captives from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1563-1760* (2014), Nabil Matar argues that Davis’s figures presupposes very large North African fleets, advanced naval capabilities, significant artillery and relentless and uninterrupted attacks over the centuries. Matar also suggests that if there had been such a large amount of Christian captives in North Africa they would surely have left an indelible imprint on the culture of the region and ‘Europeanized’ their captors in much the same way as African slaves ‘Africanized’ America. By collating archival sources Matar has listed, in chronological order from 1563 to 1760, the names of every British man, woman and child, that he has found, arriving at a figure of just over three thousand. While no exact numbers can be accurately reached Matar has attempted to achieve a bare minimum figure. I would suggest that the figure is neither as high as Davis’s estimate of one and a quarter million nor as low as Matar’s calculation. In my opinion the figure is likely to be closer to Linda Colley’s suggestion of around twenty thousand captives from England and Ireland for the period under study. While the numbers will invariably remain contentious, the captivity narratives written by returned captives provide a rich and invaluable source for study.

58 Davis, p. 15. For contemporary accounts of slave numbers see Diego de Haedo, *Topographia et Historia General de Arge* (Valladolid, 1612). He was a Benedictine monk who was held prisoner at Algiers from 1578-81; Dan, *Histoire de Barbarie et ses Corsairs* (Paris, 1649); Laugier de Tassy, *Histoire de Royaume d’Alger* (Amsterdam, 1725). He was attached to the French consulate in Algiers. The first list of captives published in England appeared in Richard Hakluyt’s *Principall Navigations* in 1589.
60 Matar, *British Captives*, pp. 197-299.
61 Ibid., p. 11.
62 These names are derived from signed petitions, lists of ransomed captives, lists of North African rulers, manuscript or published captivity accounts.
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Captivity Narratives
Barbary captivity narratives emerged in the late Elizabethan period as a separate genre from travel writing and predating narratives of American Indian captivity by almost a century. Joe Snader argues convincingly that American captivity narratives, insofar as they can be described as a separate genre at all, emerged as a ‘curious addition’ within a narrative system focused on Mediterranean captivity.  

Matar calculates that an account of Barbary captivity was published by the English in almost every decade from the Elizabethan until the Georgian periods with only a brief lapse during the Civil Wars. The fact that many captivity accounts were reprinted and ran to several editions indicates their popularity. Captives described their confinement amongst an alien society with opposing customs and beliefs. While total immersion in their captors’ culture facilitated first hand inside knowledge many captives made generalised, prejudiced judgements about a culture they considered inferior to their own. Details of forced conversion and inhumane torture were a staple of most narratives, as were the irresistible women tempting Christian men away from their faith. The fascination with Barbary captivity narratives lay in their access to unfamiliar zones, claims to truthfulness and voyeuristic promise. Emphatic assurances of empirical evidence and eye witness verification ensured that the captivity narrative was received as a factual genre, albeit with a soupçon of fictional embellishment. In this introduction I will give preliminary details of some of the texts which I will examine in more thematic detail in the following chapters.

Captives experienced the unfamiliar Islamic world from an intimate position. They laboured on ships, on building projects or in the fields of their captors. They lived in their households, ate their food, wore their clothes, and became familiar with their language, customs and their religion. Many captives never returned home, some spent over twenty years in captivity while others were deprived of their freedom for only a few months. When back on English soil captives were expected to prove their national allegiance by supplying English officialdom with any information they had gathered. The act of recollecting and recording their captivity,

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63 The first American captivity narrative was Mary Rowlandson’s *The Soveraignty and Goodness of God* published in 1682.
65 See Colley, *Captives*. 

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while simultaneously providing strategic knowledge, re-affirmed and re-established a steadfast English identity. Captivity accounts warned of the dangers of Islam, provided cultural information, offered prurient pleasure and encouraged mercantile enterprise. The captive John Rawlins warned ‘of the horrible abuses of Moores to Christians’ and how they used ‘the hopes of riches, honor, preferment and suchlike devilish baits to catch the souls of mortal men’. Richard Hasleton, who was held captive in Algeria in the late sixteenth century, alerted his readers to the ‘diverse kinds of verie pure mettales, as golde, silver, and lead; and good iron and steel’ which were plentiful. Others provided logistical information about naval and military strength, fortifications and geographical landmarks. Along with a sketch of Algiers, Francis Knight provided a description of ‘its forces by Sea and land, its Victories, its Inhabitants, its Land territories, and Riches’ (Figure 1). In *A True and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mohammetans* (1704) Joseph Pitts, a captive who converted to Islam, offered first-hand information on such things as ‘the Ramazan Fast’, preparation for worship in the mosques and the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. Pitts purported to offer accurate, authoritative and novel information but lamented the fact that ‘such a vast part of the Globe is devoted to a vile and debauch’d *Impostor*’. In common with many of his contemporaries, he apparently saw no incongruity in offering ethnographic description alongside his own diatribe against the Islamic religion.

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69 Joseph Pitts, *A True and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mohammetans with an Account of the Author’s being Taken Captive* (London, 1704), p. 35. The ‘Impostor’ was Mohammad. For information on Islam Pitts relied heavily on Humphrey Prideaux’s *The True Nature of Imposture Fully Display’d in the Life of Mahomet* (London, 1697).
Captivity discourse recounts an exceptional situation where opposing cultures with differing mores and systems of belief confront and engage with one another. Within these narratives, historical, geographical, cultural and religious elements are ‘authoritatively’ referred to. However, as one would expect, recollecting an extreme circumstance of personal subjugation compromises the potential for an objective, unemotional description of a foreign culture. Captivity narratives typically dramatize the pain and misery suffered by individuals and highlight qualities of endurance, heroism, determination and resistance by the captive in the face of extreme adversity. In an effort to prove their religious and spiritual integrity returned captives recounted the myriad tortures and temptations they had endured. Vigorous affirmations of religious loyalty are a staple of captivity narratives, even where the captives admit to having converted. While criticizing their Muslim masters many captives railed against Islamic religious practices, turning their narratives into impassioned invectives. As Matar suggests, this demonization of the people of North Africa was not grounded on speculation but on the authenticity of personal experience.\(^\text{71}\) These

accounts of Mediterranean captivity fuelled English fear of Islam. In this way captivity narratives confirmed negative, hostile stereotypes and reaffirmed and bolstered the supposed superiority of Christianity over Islam.

The protagonist, whose name usually features in the title, was typically a male from the middle or lower classes. Most were merchants, sailors or soldiers, but at least two were clergymen. Title keywords highlighted the Christian captive’s isolation and confinement under tyrannical infidels. Captives with poor writing ability were assisted in their literary endeavours by zealous editors who apologised for the humble status of the authors, vouched for the veracity of their accounts and added their own piquant details to sometimes mediocre narratives to boost sales. William Okeley tells his readers that his narrative has been ‘drawn out many years with my own hand, and many have had the perusal of it, have approved it and desired it, yet till I could prevail with a friend to teach it to speak a little better English, I could not be persuaded to let it walk abroad: the stuff and matter is my own, the trimming and form is another’s’.

Redacted versions of early accounts were included in the encyclopaedic travel compilations by Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas which achieved widespread distribution and readership. The majority of Barbary captivity narratives are written in English by or about English Protestants. An exception is the unpublished account, written in Italian, of Robert Ellyatt, a Catholic who was held captive in Tunisia in 1615. Captivity accounts composed in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods were shorter and less detailed than those that appeared after 1640, as the captives were unfamiliar with the strange culture they encountered and there was little previous knowledge available to draw on. One of the earliest English Barbary captivity narratives was the short, impersonal account by Thomas Saunders, A True Discription and Breefe Discourse, of a Most Lamentable Voyage made Latelie to Tripolie in Barbarie, in a Ship Named the Jesus (1587). Rather than detailing his own personal experience Saunders focused on the

72 Adam Elliott and Devereaux Spratt were clergymen.
73 Okeley, Ebenezer, B3v. See also Thomas Pellow’s heavily edited narrative The History of the Long Captivity and Adventures of Thomas Pellow in South Barbary (London, 1739).
74 The earliest English narratives of captivity were published by Hakluyt. Richard Hakluyt, The Principall Navigations (London, 1589); Samuel Purchas, Purchas his Pilgrimage (London, 1613).
76 Thomas Saunders, A True Discription and Breefe Discourse of a Most Lamentable Voyage made latelie to Tripolie in Barbarie in a Ship named the Jesus (London, 1587). Saunders’s account was also published as ‘The Voyage made to Tripolis in Barbarie in the yeere 1584’, in Richard Hakluyt,
torture, apostasy and circumcision of other members of his crew, which he claimed to have witnessed. Describing the victimisation and forced conversion of a fellow captive became a central trope of the genre. Many accounts were filled with wild embellishments and fabulous anecdotes. Edward Webbe, who described himself as ‘a simple man void of all learning’, included sightings of unicorns and a beast with four heads in his ‘truthful’ late sixteenth-century account dedicated to Elizabeth I.\textsuperscript{77} John Rawlins described his narrative of Algerian captivity as a ‘Comick Tragedie’ and the unpolished work of a poor sailor.\textsuperscript{78} He slipped intermittently from third to first person as he described the activities of renegade corsairs and outlined the physical tortures used to ‘turn’ Christians to Islam. With Christian fortitude and divine assistance he resisted the pressure to convert and ultimately succeeded in organising a mutiny by means of which he and his fellow captives escaped. Rawlins’s narrative celebrates his self-reliance, leadership skills and heroic exploits. These early accounts posit the merciful and powerful Christian God of the captive in opposition to the false, cruel, superstitious faith of the captors. None of the early accounts reached the level of detail or the geographical variety that the post-1640 accounts achieved.

The publication of Francis Knight’s \textit{A Relation of Seven Yeares Slaverie under the Turkes of Argeire Suffered by an English Captive Merchant} in 1640 reveals a new focus on informative analysis and a non-fictive narrative grounded on personal experience. Knight divided his longer and more detailed account into two sections, the first dealing with his personal experience of captivity and the second part providing ethnographic information and aesthetic description and commentary. He detailed the ‘materials of gold and silver’ diamonds and pearls, the ‘Spoyles of

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\textsuperscript{77} Edward Webbe, \textit{The rare and most wonderful things which Edward Webbe an Englishman borne, hath seene and passed in his troublesome travailes} (London, 1590). Captured off the coast of Livorno, Webbe spent six years as a galley slave, and later fought as a gunner for the Turks in their campaign against Persia. Webbe was one of twenty captives ransomed in 1588 through the intercession of William Harborne. Webbe’s account was reprinted in 1590, 1592 and 1600. On his journey home to England, Webbe was detained in Rome for being ‘in trouble with the Pope’. He was forced to wear ‘a fooles coate on my backe halfe blew, halfe yeallowe and a cockes-combe with three bells on my head, D4v.

\textsuperscript{78} Rawlins, E3r.
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all Christendome’, which were ripe for the taking. Knight’s self-assured account actively encouraged invasion: ‘The greater the Enemie, the more worthy the Conquest’.  

Captivity narratives are permeated by an English Protestant dogma that ‘combines religious and national sectarianism’. William Okeley’s staunchly Protestant captivity account, Ebenezer; Or a Small Monument of Great Mercy (1675), was printed thirty-two years after he escaped from captivity. Okeley relied heavily on biblical references as he compared his captivity to that of the Israelites in Babylon. He offered some ‘remarkable observations’ of life in Algiers but his account is saturated with anti-Islamic and anti-Catholic invective. His narrative pursues a providentialist thread ‘of God’s own working, not of man’s inventing’ which, he claimed, contained ‘nothing in fact but what is precisely true’. Okeley admits to receiving ‘not only pity and compassion but love and friendship’ from one of his masters and suggested that: ‘had I been his son, I could not have met with more respect nor been treated with more tenderness’. However he qualifies his emotion with a reminder of the reality of his situation: ‘Fetters of gold do not lose their nature; they are fetters still’. Okeley successfully ran a business selling ‘lead, iron, shot strong-waters, tobacco and many other things’, before cunningly outsmarting his captors by escaping in a makeshift boat. These later texts combine the personal and religious with the descriptive and informative.

The late 1680s witnessed the turning point of Ottoman dominance and the developing sense of European supremacy. The concerns and literary style of writers began to change as they became less fearful and increasingly romanticized their accounts of the Ottomans. In writings about the Ottomans, Islam and Barbary a more confident and dismissive tone gradually develops. It is only at this stage that narratives by returned captives who admit to having converted to Islam are published. The two best known English captivity narratives of the early eighteenth

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79 Knight, p. 54.
80 Vitkus, Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption, p. 57.
81 See Snader, pp. 34-37. Mary Rowlandson’s narrative written seven years later is stylistically similar. Both refer extensively to the Bible and interpret their suffering as divinely ordained.
82 Okeley, A2v.
83 Ibid., p. 42.
84 Ibid., p. 18. From his earnings he had to give his master two dollars (Spanish pieces of eight) a month.
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century involve the lengthy captivity of two young male captives who underwent cultural transformation and religious conversion. Joseph Pitts (1663-1739?) and Thomas Pellow (b. 1704) adapted well to their adopted culture, converted, prospered and achieved social advancement. They are unusual in that upon their return to England they admitted to having ‘turned Turk’. Both struggled with a conflicting sense of identity and a presumed loss of religious and cultural allegiance. Pitts was in his early thirties when he eventually made a hazardous escape to England. In 1704, ten years after his return, he published an account of his travels.86 He suggests that it was with great reluctance ‘which the reader may guess at’ that he published it. Aware that his apostasy would earn the censure and reproaches of some readers, he firmly established his positive attachment to Christianity:

my principal End in its Publication, is giving Glory to GOD, by whose gracious Providence I am releas’d from Slavery, and reduced into my own native Country, where there are no Means of Salvation wanting, and where the Blessed Doctrine of Jesus is established, and the Holy Trinity ador’d.87

His book records the manners, customs and rituals of the Algerians and provides an eye-witness account, by a convert, of the holy places of Islam.88 His skill at turning an abject situation to his advantage and successfully mastering an alien environment, language and economy proved his stamina and superior intellect. But his participation in what he regarded as an inferior culture and his hybrid cultural identity created anxiety and ambiguity. His narrative reveals significant tensions and internal conflict and a crisis of identity.

In 1715 Thomas Pellow, aged eleven, of Penryn, Cornwall, was captured by Moroccan corsairs, and spent twenty-three years in captivity. Pellow learned Arabic, married, trained as a soldier and eventually escaped and returned to Penryn in 1738. Pellow’s editor acknowledged Pellow’s unique ‘opportunities of observation’ but blatantly manipulated Pellow’s problematic identity: ‘by his outward embracing of the Mahometan Faith, and becoming, as it were, one of the Natives [Pellow] had repeated Opportunities of knowing and noting every Thing worthy [of] Observation’. He added lengthy footnotes in support of Pellow’s testimony and presented the

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87 Pitts (1704), The Preface, A6r.

88 Despite having visited Mecca, Pitts acknowledges in his text his debt to Prideaux’s *The True Nature of Imposture fully display’d in the Life of Mahomet* (1697). Pitts, p. 13.
narrative as ‘The most extraordinary and entertaining History’ which would provide agreeable ‘Entertainment to the Publick in general’.\(^{89}\) In their narratives Pitts and Pellow emphasize their unconquerable English spirit and their loyalty to the Christian faith. However their texts undermine their claims and reveal that they were deeply transformed by their years of captivity in Barbary.

As most seafarers were male, and women accounted for only a tiny proportion of passengers on merchant ships, it was rare for women to be captured at sea by pirates.\(^{90}\) Nevertheless some women did travel and were taken captive. This study culminates in an examination of *The Female Captive* (1769) published anonymously by Elizabeth Marsh who was the first English woman to publish a Barbary captivity narrative.\(^ {91}\) This unique text offers a first-hand, female perspective on Barbary captivity. Marsh adopts the conventions of sentimental fiction and presents herself as a virtuous heroine whose body and soul are in danger of being defiled. The threat of physical violation and spiritual conversion that loomed over Marsh as a defenceless female captive added to the suspense and titillating appeal of her narrative.

**Critical Context**

Although situated temporally in the early modern period, my study has benefited greatly from the substantial scholarship which has focused on the development of Western ideas, prejudices and misapprehensions about Islam and Mohammad in the Middle-Ages.\(^ {92}\) Medieval Christians had been intimidated by the military, intellectual and economic sophistication of the Muslim world. With the establishment of commercial and diplomatic ties in the late sixteenth century, English views about the East were varied and inconsistent. England, an inconsequential island on the edge of Europe and not yet a colonial power, marvelled at the wealth and might of the Ottoman Empire. Travellers and authors expressed a

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89 Pellow, p. 3.
90 Davis, *Christian Slaves*, p. 36.
range of sentiments about the Ottomans – admiration, awe, jealousy suspicion, contempt – which did not stem from an assumption of superiority or arrogance, but reflect a complicated and uncertain relationship.

In 1937 Samuel Chew’s interrogation of English encounters with Islam, through an analysis of Elizabethan literature, initiated a critical scholarship which has continued to flourish. *The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England during the Renaissance* depicts the early modern image of Islam and identifies the gamut of emotions which Islam inspired in the English.93 Chew found that, unlike historical sources, dramatic representations of Turks and Moors were outrageous stereotypes which greatly diminished Turkish characters. Less well known is an article ‘The Oriental in Elizabethan Drama’ (1915) by Louis Wann. In his examination of forty-seven plays written between 1579 and 1642 Wann found that the characterisation of Eastern subjects by Elizabethan dramatists revealed an attitude of genuine interest and was ‘a more accurate and dispassionate portrayal of oriental character’ than we would assume.94 During the second half of the twentieth century several histories of the Barbary corsairs and English encounters in the Mediterranean were produced.95

Edward Said’s influential study *Orientalism* (1978) marked a turning point in the analysis of Western representations of the Orient. Drawing on Foucault’s insights into the relationship between knowledge and power Said defined ‘Orientalism’ as a Western ‘body of theory and practice’ based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident’ which is used as a method for dominating, restructuring and maintaining authority over the East.96 The starting point for Orientalism, according to Said, was the Napoleonic occupation of Egypt in

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94 Louis Wann, ‘The Oriental in Elizabethan Drama’, *Modern Philology*, 12 (1915), 163-87 (p.182). Wann concluded that he had ‘little hesitation in recording my belief that, speaking not only comparatively but absolutely, the average Elizabethan had as wide and as accurate a knowledge of the Orient as has the average American of the present day’, p. 187.


the late eighteenth century, following the downfall of Islamic imperialism. Turkish decline at the end of the seventeenth century forced the West to reimagine the Orient in an effort to understand it. Orientalism defines the unfamiliar Islamic world as an inferior, barbaric, feminine ‘other’, without history or civilisation. The West, in contrast, is progressive, civilised, rational and masculine. According to Said these concepts gradually dominate modes of describing the East, and establish themselves as Orientalism.

Analysis and discussion of Said’s Orientalist discourse produced a surge of scholarship focusing on representations of Islam and Muslims in early modern texts. Theorists highlight the complex nature of the multifarious descriptions of the East in this period. Many academics now agree that in the early modern period ‘the conditions for Orientalism’ did not exist in England, and critique the misapplication of Said’s homogeneous theory to this era. My analysis of captivity narratives leads me to concur that an orientalist viewpoint based on power is not applicable in the early modern period. While many captives did attempt to acquire strategic information and some went so far as to suggest military action and conquest, the English were keenly aware of their inadequacies in the face of Ottoman power. As Richmond Barbour has suggested ‘Tudor-Stuart constructions of “the East” came into wider service later; but the power they articulated at inception was, in global terms, local and self-congratulatory.’ In his analysis of English representations of Islam Jonathan Burton argues that the ‘representative practices of high imperialism’ can be found germinating in earlier periods. He suggests that we need to ‘re-Orient’ ourselves and understand the marginal position of Europe in relation to the Chinese, Indian, Persian and Ottoman Empires. Matthew Dimmock has suggested


99 Barbour, p.6.

100 Burton, Traffic and Turning, p. 12.
that many critics are so caught up in Said’s work that they end up reasserting the basic divisions of his thesis in the process of denying them.101

Critical engagement with the captivity genre was revitalized by Nabil Matar’s pioneering historicist trilogy102 and by Daniel Vitkus’s anthology of seven Barbary captivity narratives, informatively introduced by Matar.103 Utilising a wide range of sources Matar discusses relations between Britain and Barbary and investigates the influence of Islam on the English imagination and psyche. He analyses the role of the captivity narrative in creating and reinforcing stereotypes of the Muslim world and its people. He explores representations of the renegade and considers allegations of sexual deviance which attached to converts. He examines ransom petitions and discusses the implications of captivity in the lives of the women left to fend for themselves at home in England. Matar asserts that the allure of Islam was so strong that substantial time and energy were spent denigrating it and those who converted to it. In an attempt to correct the one-sidedness of English studies which focus on Christian sources Matar has translated accounts of Arabic travellers.104 Matar was among the first to challenge the application of Edward Said’s Orientalist theory to the early modern period. He asserts that in this period the English were conscious of their inferiority and did not enjoy military or economic power over Islamic countries. Critiquing Matar, Dimmock has pointed out that ‘in an assertion that reconstitutes the Orientalist oppositions he earlier discredits’, Matar suggests that dramatic representations were responsible for creating negative stereotypes of Turks and Moors that did not belong to the actual encounter with Muslims.105 Dimmock argues that English encounters with Muslims both real and imagined, multiplied and complicated notions of the ‘turke’ that had been contested from their very

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inception.106 Richmond Barbour, Jonathan Burton, Emily Bartels and others have also demonstrated that images of Muslims were far more varied, complicated and nuanced than previously believed. Burton uses the term trafficking to highlight that cultural production occurs at and axis or ‘entrepôt’ of various conflicting forces from which these forces come away changed. He uses trafficking to emphasize the ‘bilateral mercantile and cultural exchanges that characterized Anglo-Islamic encounters and argues that trafficking is vital to the drama of the period and the construction of a European ‘Renaissance’.107

Complementing Matar’s scholarship, Gerald MacLean’s extensive oeuvre presents early modern perceptions of the Ottoman world as being far more diverse and complex than the binary dualism of East-West relations proposed by Said.108 He focuses on the impact of Ottoman culture and society on the development of English identity and emphasises the evolving nature of Englishness. Adopting Marxist, Feminist and New Historicist approaches MacLean critiques Said’s Orientalism. MacLean proposes that ‘Ottomanism’ captures the ambiguities of early modern English discourse about the Ottomans that preceded Orientalism. He suggests that ‘instead of any simple desire for domination, we will find instead a restructuring of desire, knowledge and power: imperial envy’.109 This was driven by both lack and desire, which, he suggests, says more about the desiring subject than about the object of knowledge. MacLean argues that this imperial envy shaped emergent imperialist ambitions.

Matar and MacLean’s research has been invaluable to my work and I have endeavoured to add to and broaden their discussion of captivity narratives. My study encompasses a wide chronological timeframe in order to examine both male and female accounts. I focus on the narratives themselves to obtain a perspective of how conversion to Islam was conceived in the early modern imagination. I explore the ambiguity that attached to captivity and conversion and how this was articulated in

106 Dimmock, New Turkes, p. 10.
107 Burton, Traffic and Turning, p. 15.
109 Maclean, Looking East, p. 20.
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print. I concentrate specifically on the physical realities of conversion, the allure of Islam and the allegations of sexual deviation that attached to those who converted. As neither critic has focused heavily on female captivity I have analysed The Female Captive (1769) by Elizabeth Marsh, which, despite the research by Linda Colley, remains little studied. I examine the profound differences between male and female experiences of captivity and conversion and in the public articulation of those experiences.

Much previous research on captivity narratives had focused on the Native American Indian captivity narrative with much research defining it as the original root of the genre.¹¹⁰ In Caught between Worlds: British Captivity Narratives in Fact and Fiction (2000), Joe Snader argues convincingly that the captivity genre did not originate with Native American Indian captivity but was an expansive genre bridging disparate continents. Snader’s scope is chronologically, geographically and textually broad. Spanning the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries he examines autobiographical narratives and texts which combine elements of truth with fictional embellishments. He suggests that the origins of the English novel can be traced to the captivity narrative. Snader examines the varied and ambiguous relationships between British captives and their captors. Captivity narratives revealed the dangers and attractions of submersion in an alien culture and were a means of confronting the fact that Englishmen and women might ‘abandon civility and redefine themselves within the terms of alien cultures’.¹¹¹ I develop this argument and concentrate on the fear inspired by conversion to Islam and its effect on English identity. I look at the suspicion and sexual allegations that attached to converts and the tense reintegration of the returned captive to English society.

Linda Colley’s historical study, Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600-1850 (2002), examines the role that captivity played in the formation of the


¹¹¹ Snader, p. 5.
British nation. She highlights the vulnerability of English men and women to captivity throughout this period. Her research, which is geographically and chronologically wide, unearths many previously neglected, marginal texts including that of Elizabeth Marsh. In a subsequent biography Colley reconstructs Marsh’s family history, her travels and tribulations. Drawing on Colley’s study, I examine Marsh’s text from a literary perspective and compare it with male-authored captivity narratives. In her discussion of North Africa, Colley neglects to discuss, in any detail, renegades or those who had ‘turned Turk’. As these were central concerns for early modern society I focus specifically on this aspect of captivity narratives.

Representation of the ‘Turk’ on the early modern stage has received extensive scholarly attention. Prominent among these studies is Daniel J. Vitkus’s edition of *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England* (2000) and his monograph *Turning Turk: English Theatre and the Multicultural Mediterranean* (2003) which broadens critical discourse about lesser known plays. Vitkus’s impressive literary scholarship offers a significant contribution to the study of the early modern English engagement with the Muslim world. In his analysis of English drama which featured Turks and Eastern themes, Vitkus concurs with Matar that Englishmen were enticed to convert by the allure of Islam which promised wealth, prestige and seduction: ‘For these playwrights, Islam is a religion of temptation’. Vitkus also highlights the sense of inferiority felt by the English when faced with the might of the Ottoman Empire and suggests that a Saidian “Orientalist discourse” based on power and the control of knowledge was not possible in the early modern period. As the drama of this period has been so widely discussed I have omitted an analysis of same from this thesis. My study aims to complement the existing scholarship on drama.

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112 Colley investigates captivity narratives from the Mediterranean, America, India and Afghanistan and ‘combines the large-scale, panoramic and global, with the small-scale, the individual, and the particular’, Colley, *Captives*, p. 17.


115 Ibid., *Turning Turk*, p. 108.

116 Ibid., p. 31.
In *Islamic Conversion and Christian Resistance on the Early Modern Stage* (2010), Jane Degenhardt examines plays by Shakespeare, Marlowe, Massinger and others and investigates how conversion to Islam and Christian resistance and redemption were imagined in early modern drama. She explores the ties between sexuality, conversion and race. She notes that in plays of the period ‘idealization of embodied chastity as a strategy of resistance to conversion addresses the particular vulnerability of the female Christian body to sexual contamination by the Turk’. She shares Benedict Robinson’s view that the history of English imperialism begins prior to its absolute realization.

Complementing Degenhardt’s work I examine how the female Christian body is portrayed in captivity narratives and consider the gendered implications of conversion. I focus on captivity narratives and the links between conversion to Islam and sexual desire. I concentrate on the distinctly different physical manifestations of conversion for men and women. I compare and contrast the account of Elizabeth Marsh, who resisted temptation and conversion, with accounts of male captivity.

Asli Çirakman suggests that the ambivalent images produced by early modern travellers about the Ottomans can be explained as a condition of ‘prejudice’ as determined by Gadamer. This is not necessarily a disparaging concept as it merely suggests that in comprehending other cultures, early modern travellers and writers projected a meaning in terms of their own historical cultural point of view onto the manners, customs, history, politics and daily life of Ottoman society. The knowledge they gathered was filtered, through this condition of prejudice, by their own understanding of what was familiar or threatening in Ottoman society.

My study has drawn on the foundational work of Michel Foucault on sexuality and its relationship to power and knowledge. The observations of anthropologist Mary Douglas have been central to my discussion of the body. For

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117 Ibid., p. 29.
120 Çirakman, p. 38.
an analysis of women and gender in the early modern period I have drawn on the work of Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks.\textsuperscript{123}

My research builds on these strong foundations and continues the important task of analysing early modern attitudes towards captivity and conversion to Islam. Rather than focusing on literary texts or dramatic representations, which have been well studied, I concentrate on captivity narratives which were written by those who had actually experienced Islamic captivity. I place strong emphasis on the implications of sexuality and gender within the captivity narrative genre. I examine the complex relationship between truth and fiction in the narratives and how it changes over time. I look at how early modern identity was expressed in print and how it might be transformed and what was at stake in that transformation. The role of equivocation in conversion will be investigated. I consider the texts as they were written and interpreted at the time, concentrating on writing by ordinary people who had been held captive and had witnessed or undergone conversion. Their extreme experiences produced a gamut of sentiments and became the touchstone for drama, fiction, scholarship and propaganda.

\textbf{Chapter Summaries}

The thesis follows a thematic plan of organization with each chapter dealing with the phenomenon of ‘turning Turk’ which was documented in Barbary captivity narratives, travellers’ accounts and sermons. The first chapter provides an overview of how Islam was imagined by early modern society and considers the ominous and pervasive fear that Muslims were intent on converting the whole world to the ‘Mahomedan unbelief’.\textsuperscript{124} There was acute anxiety that ‘Mahometans’ threatened Christians not only with their military strength but with the allure of their faith – a faith which was grossly misrepresented and little understood. The term Mahometan or ‘Mussulmen’ incorporated various ethnic groups and configurations – Turks, Tartars, Moors, Arabs, Saracens, Ishmaelites or Hagerenes – all connected through Muhammad. Although English writers denigrated Islam and portrayed it as a bastard religion founded by frauds for apostates and renegades, they were amazed and

\textsuperscript{123} Merry E. Wiesner, \textit{Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

\textsuperscript{124} Okeley, A8r.
frightened by the ease with which it could attract converts. While the reasons for conversion varied, nowhere was the threat of conversion more fully realised than under conditions of captivity. Travellers reported on the pomp and spectacle involved in conversion ceremonies but were saddened to see their fellow countrymen turbaned and lost to the Christian faith.

Figures of moral authority were faced with the alarming reality that changing faith and cultural identity could be done as easily as changing one’s clothing and chanting a few unfamiliar words. Suspicion and innuendo surrounded captives that did manage to return to their communities. In the early seventeenth century apostasy sermons and penitential rites were established to reintegrate the returned renegade into his Christian congregation. This involved lengthy denunciation from the pulpit or suffering the public humiliation of wearing a penitential sheet before being reaccepted as a Christian. To regain his identity the apostate was expected to ‘cast off his barbarous barbarian habit and [put] on a Christian resolution’. These apostasy sermons attest to the widespread concern that surrounded captivity, religious conversion and reintegration.

Chapters two and three emphasise the sexualised nature of early modern understandings of turning Turk while chapters four and five focus on the gendered implications of captivity. Chapter two considers the terror and suspicion aroused by the threat of Islamic circumcision of male captives and its effect upon early modern English religious and cultural identity. Circumcision came to be seen as a defining practice of Muslims, a cut which they not only bore themselves but which they could inflict on unwilling Englishmen or those lured to convert by the prospect of wealth and prestige. Voluntary submission to circumcision by an Englishman was considered a rejection of his culture and religion, and was a fundamental betrayal of

125 The OED describes an apostate as one who ‘abjures or forsakes his religious faith, or abandons his moral allegiance; a pervert’. LEME cites an early reference to an apostate from Laurence Nowell Vocabularium Saxonicum, c. 1567. His entry describes an apostate as a ‘rinegate or hypocrite’. The terms renegado, renegade and renegade were used interchangeably to describe someone who had abandoned their religious beliefs, specifically a Christian who had converted to Islam. Renegade was used as early as the twelfth century to mean an apostate. The English captive Thomas Saunders used the Spanish word ‘renegado’ to describe ‘one that first was a Christian, and afterwards becommeth a Turke’, ‘The Voyage made to Tripolis in Barbarie in the yeere 1583 with a ship called the Jesus’, in The Principall Navigations ed. by Richard Hakluyt (1589), p 186. In 1611, John Florio defined ‘rinegato’ as ‘a renegade, a foresworne man, one that hath renounced his religion or country’, Queen Anna’s New World of Words (London, 1611).

126 Edward Kellet and Henry Byam, A Return from Argier. A Sermon Preached at Minhead in the County of Somerset the 16 of March, 1627 at the Re-Admission of a Relapsed Christian into Our Church (London, 1628) p. 77.
his identity. In captives’ accounts Islamic conversion is manifested through the body. Cutting and defiling the private parts of an Englishman’s body was described with horror and aversion. There was uncertainty about the sexual element of circumcision and it was often associated with eunuchism, emasculation or with the restriction of sexual desire. But in English thought, circumcision was not merely a physical violation. It was also an immutable symbol of affiliation to a foreign culture and attachment to an alien faith. Bearing the indelible mark of apostasy, a Christian became ‘Other’.

While circumcision was a tangible marker of conversion borne by the convert as permanent evidence of his supposed or actual apostasy, the alleged victim of sodomy did not bear a visible, indelible bodily mark. Chapter three suggests that conversion to Islam by Christian males carried with it a suggestion of an alteration or deviation in sexual preferences and accusations of sodomitical behaviour. Captivity narratives and many travel accounts highlight the sexual peril to male captives and reveal anxieties about the penetration and emasculation of passive Christian men by Muslim predators. Linda Colley suggests that accusing the Ottoman Empire and the Barbary States of sodomizing Christian men indicated the fear and uncertainty experienced by the English when faced with Islamic power and voiced an ancient concern that Islam would gain converts and triumph over Christianity. Insinuations about ‘sodomitical’ behaviour aroused suspicion that the captive had willingly transgressed and his sexuality was questionable thereafter. This chapter outlines what the concept of sodomy actually meant to early modern society. Attitudes to sodomy in Christendom and in particular in England will be examined. Sodomy was depicted as occurring beyond England’s borders and the sodomizing Muslim became a stock image for travellers who eagerly recounted the multifarious acts of sodomy they claimed to have witnessed. Gaining access to the vulnerable bodies of Christians, the Muslim sodomite posed a potential threat to the permeable boundaries of English cultural and religious identity.

Chapter four is the first of two chapters dealing with women, and maintains the focus on themes of sexuality which run throughout the thesis. The temptation to forsake one’s religion and embrace Islam was embodied by exaggerated images of irresistible Ottoman women. Simultaneously, accounts of chaste Christian virgins

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enslaved in harems, sexually defiled and forced to convert by lustful masters, were widespread, and highlighted the danger of captivity for Christian women. Captives’ accounts emphasise Islam’s sexual promiscuity while idealizing Christian constancy and resistance to seduction. This chapter examines depictions by travellers and captives, of women in the harems of the Ottoman Empire and North Africa. Travellers related increasingly exaggerated accounts of their furtive sightings of these secluded women who evaded the male gaze. Male captives who claimed to have privileged access to female spaces recounted their firm resistance to sexual entrapment and conversion by harem women. Some created complex fantasies of sexual conquest and romantic intrigue. Harems and the women who occupied them provided endless scope for the imagination and created an ideal forum to raise and discuss sexual topics and anxieties. These accounts reveal an underlying wariness about the female sexual appetite, the nature of women and the male role. Whether hostile, prejudicial or misconceived, they influenced English thought on foreign women and sexuality. The second section of the chapter focuses on the portrayal of female Christian captives in male-authored accounts. These women were reported on sporadically as they were glimpsed in the slave markets of Istanbul and Barbary, destined for the harems that would detain them. The sale and acquisition of young virgins inevitably attracted notable literary attention. Virginity was a highly valued status both in Christianity and Islam. For a female captive the retention of her virginity was particularly relevant as proof of not having capitulated to foreign temptation. As conversion and the sexual conquest of the female body were indelibly linked, chaste, virginal Christian women served as a defence against the onslaught of Islam.

Chapter five focuses on the captivity experience of Elizabeth Marsh (1735-1785), who published her narrative, *The Female Captive*, in 1769. Her unique text, which has received little critical attention to-date, offers a first-hand, female perspective on the experience of Barbary captivity. Adopting the conventions of sentimental fiction, Marsh refashions herself as a heroine whose virtue and faith

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129 This text is unique insofar as it is the first account written by an English woman of her captivity in Barbary. In 2003, Khalid Bekkaoui edited *The Female Captive: A Narrative of Facts which Happened in Barbary, in the Year 1756*. In 2011 he published an anthology of female captivity narratives *White Women Captives in North Africa: Narratives of Enslavement, 1735-1830* which includes Marsh’s account. See also Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh*. 

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were endangered, but who survived with body and soul intact. Generally, captives wrote to clear their names but Marsh’s narrative is ambiguous and, as an exercise in damage limitation, could have done little to rescue her reputation. Her narrative confirms that reintegration into English society was difficult and challenging for returned captives generally, and for women in particular. Female captives were imagined to have crossed both sexual and spiritual boundaries. Anxiety surrounded the idea of the sexual penetration and conversion of a Christian woman by a Muslim man, as women were considered more susceptible than men to religious and cultural conversion. Once women had been held captive or enslaved they were subjected to condemnation and innuendo, and, when they returned to their communities they were viewed with suspicion. The survivor would be expected to recount her vigorous defence against violation and her staunch resistance to conversion.\footnote{Baepler, p. 11. Returned male captives also had to defend themselves against accusations of religious and cultural contamination.} Female captivity raises issues of confinement and sexual vulnerability.

Captivity afforded an intimate familiarity with an alien culture and provided unique occasions of cultural exchange and interaction not available to the mere traveller. However, conversion, circumcision and sexual promiscuity demonstrated the alterity and cultural difference to which the captive was exposed in Muslim societies. My reading of captivity narratives suggests that the threat of Islamic conversion was not conceived solely in religious or spiritual terms but was corporeal and had intimations of sexual defilement for both men and women. Turning Turk was perceived as a physical and sexual threat to the Christian body. Whether Christian captives converted voluntarily or were coerced, ‘turning Turk’ was generally referred to in hostile terms and perceived negatively. Those who reneged on their faith and ‘turned Turk’ came to represent everything that was feared and loathed about foreign travel and cultural contamination. Knowledge about Islam and Muslims was forged as a result of information relayed by returned captives which was presented as truthful testament based on experience. These literary constructions eventually became accepted as a set of commonplaces which helped mould and strengthen English religious and cultural identity, while reaffirming negative stereotypes of Turks, Moors and Islam.
Christian captives who found themselves unwillingly immersed in an alien environment in Islamic countries were threatened with a powerful alteration of identity and circumstance. The abject conditions of captivity rendered them particularly susceptible to conversion. The scale of the problem in the late seventeenth century prompted the English diplomat Paul Rycaut (1629-1700), consul at Smyrna, to suggest that many Christians were turning ‘daily to the Profession of Turcism’.¹ To ‘turn’ was to undergo a complete alteration of identity, conceived not only as a religious conversion, but a total cultural and psychological transformation.

This chapter will firstly establish an overview of how Islam was perceived in the English imagination. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there was increased interest in Islam but this did not generate any significant empathy towards the religion. Indeed the majority of English writing on the subject contains vitriolic anti-Islamic rhetoric. Of course this cannot be detached from historical conditions of geopolitical conflict. Fear and unfamiliarity led to the creation of grossly exaggerated myths of Muhammad. Although English writers belittled Islam and portrayed it as a false religion founded by frauds they were alarmed at the rate at which it was gaining Christian converts. Archival and printed sources confirm that Christians became Muslims in diverse circumstances and for a multitude of reasons.² I will examine captives’ accounts to establish the motives that were put forward as to why Christians turned Turk.³ Captives and travellers who witnessed conversion ceremonies supplied vivid descriptions of what was involved in the process.⁴ In England an acute paranoia developed that apostates would return to their communities without acknowledging their conversion. I will consider the Church’s role in the reintegration of those who returned from captivity. Public penitential rites were performed and specifically tailored apostasy sermons were preached to ensure

³ Most captives described the conversion of those they observed while some recounted their own experience.
⁴ These will be discussed further below.
the captive was properly reintegrated into English society. These rites were designed to purge the apostate of spiritual and cultural contamination and were considered cathartic for both the individual and the community.

The perceived threat of ‘Turcism’
The threat of an Islamic invasion of Europe was heightened after the territorial loss of Constantinople to the Ottomans, led by Mehmed II, in 1453. Sustained Ottoman conquest of European cities caused considerable fear and concern for the English, with an Islamic assault on England considered an ongoing possibility. The triumph of Christian forces over the Ottomans at Lepanto in 1571 may have signalled the end of Ottoman supremacy in the Mediterranean but the temptation of Islam and the fear of Ottoman expansion did not fully diminish until after the Battle of Vienna in 1683 and ‘the signing of peace accords with the Holy Roman Empire, with Poland and with Venice at Karlovitz (1699) and with Russia (1700)’. Suraiya Faroqhi emphasizes that before Ottoman defeat in the Russo-Ottoman war of 1768-74, the power of the sultan’s armies continued to be taken seriously. Daniel J. Vitkus suggests that, from a Christian perspective, Islam was ‘an aggressively expanding, competing form of monotheism’ that sought to engulf and elide Christianity.

Xenophobic discourse in early modern England pointed to the continuous threat to Christianity from the false doctrines and unnatural vices of immoral Muslims. Biblical references, holy war, medieval romances and legends of chivalric Christian knights defending Christendom from the Saracen foe, all contributed to

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5 See Paul Coles, The Ottoman Impact on Europe (London: Thames & Hudson, 1968) and Chew, The Crescent and the Rose. The Ottoman Empire consisted of modern-day Turkey, Egypt, Greece, Hungary, Romania and parts of Iraq as well as the North African Barbary states of Algiers, Tripoli and Tunis which had their own independent governments but were under Ottoman authority. For a genealogy of the Ottomans see A. D. Alderson, The Structure of the Ottoman Dynasty (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956).
6 After their conquest of Constantinople, over the following two hundred years, the Ottomans were victorious at battles including Athens (1458), Otranto (1480), Rhodes (1522), Budapest (1541), and Cyprus (1570).
7 Kenneth Parker, ‘Introduction’ in Early Modern Tales of Orient: A Critical Anthology, ed. by Kenneth Parker (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 1-35 (p. 3). The Battle of Vienna in 1683 signalled the start of the Great Turkish War (between the Ottoman Empire and a European Holy League) which lasted fifteen years and ended with the Treaty of Karlovitz in 1699.
produce a deformed notion of Islam and the East.¹⁰ In a sermon published in 1586 Meredith Hanmer (1543-1604), a Church of England clergyman, declared that the ‘Christian religion is now couched in the North partes of the world, and so far that it seemeth (if we look for fruit) all frozen. The professors are now a little flock.’¹¹ Despite the fact that his sermon was preached at the ‘baptizing of a Turke’ into the Christian faith, he portrayed an image of a religion in retreat, dwindling and impotent, fearfully awaiting religious onslaught. Although there was intense hatred and suspicion of ‘Popery’ by English authorities, Islam,¹² or ‘Turcism’¹³ as it was more commonly referred to, was also perceived as a significant menace to English identity.¹⁴ The military success of the Ottomans thrust Muhammad and his enigmatic doctrine into the imagination of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Christians.¹⁵ In his study of the religions of the world, Alexander Ross (1591-1654), raised the fearful query ‘How far hat this Mahumetan Superstition got footing in the world?’¹⁶ There was a genuine fear that Christian communities would succumb to Islam and erect the ‘Half-Moon instead of the Crosse’.¹⁷ The Anglican minister Rev. Charles

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¹⁰ Isidore of Seville (c. 560-635), a contemporary of Muhammad, and Bede (c.673-735) identified Saracens with the biblical bondwoman Hagar who was wife to Abraham and mother to Ishmael. This identification caused confusion as to why they were known as Saracens if they were not descendants of Sarah, Abraham’s first wife. Isidore also suggested they were called Saracens from their origins in the desert near Syria. Isidore’s Chronica maior was written in two redactions in the early seventh century. During the Crusades Saracens became synonymous with Muslims. See Southern, Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages, p. 15; Tolan, Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination, pp.10-12; Dimmock, Mythologies of the Prophet Muhammad in Early Modern English Culture, p. 229 note. 21. See also Daniel, Islam and the West; Richard Fletcher, The Cross and the Crescent: Christianity and Islam from Muhammad to the Reformation (New York: Viking, 2004).


¹² The OED cites the earliest reference to the word ‘Islam’ in English as being in 1613 in Purchas his Pilgrimage. ‘These (they say) are friends to the Islams that is, Catholike, or right-beleeving Musulmans’, p. 311. Dimmock asserts the earliest use of ‘Mahometanisme’ was in Heinrich Bullinger’s Fiftie godly and learned sermons divided into five decades, trans. H. I. (London, 1577), p. 856. Dimmock, Mythologies, p. 223, note. 6.

¹³ The OED traces the earliest references to ‘Turcism’ to the second half of the sixteenth century. Cardinal William Allen described Greeks and Hungarians as ‘infected with Turcisme’, An Apologie and True Declaration of the Institution and Endeavours of the two English Colleges (Rheims, 1581), p. 29v; Anthony Munday suggested that ‘if any Prince fall by infidelity into Turcsisme, Atheisme, Paganisme, or any such lyke that the Pope hath authoritie to depose such a Prince’, A breefe and true reporte of the execution of certain traytours (London, 1582), C2v. In a sermon preached on 19 June 1621 before James I, Archbishop William Laud referred to ‘Heathenisme, Turcisme, Judaisme, Heresie, Superstition and Schisme’, Seven Sermons (London, 1651), p. 18.


¹⁵ Dimmock, Mythologies, p. 10.


¹⁷ Ibid.
Fitzgeffry expressed fear that ‘God can turne great Britaine into Barbary’ and urged that his congregation ‘be constant in [their] Christian profession’.  

The anonymous author of an influential compilation of translated sources *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (1597), described the Ottomans as a people who were ‘rude, barbarous, base, vile and ignominious’.  

He voiced the ominous fear that they intended to amplify and increase their religion in all parts of the world, both by arms and otherwise: And that it is lawful for them to enforce and compel, to allure, to seduce, and to persuade all men to the embracing of their sect and superstitions: and to prosecute all such with fire and sword, as shall either oppose themselves against their religion, or shall refuse to conform and submit themselves to their ceremonies and traditions. And this they do to the intent the name and doctrine of their Prophet Mahomet may be everywhere, and of all nations, reverenced and embraced. Hence it is that the Turks do desire nothing more than to draw both Christians and others to embrace their religion and to turn Turk.

There is no doubt that the likelihood of mass conversion to the Muslim faith and the threatening phenomenon of ‘turning Turk’ inspired a mixture of horror and fascination amongst a populace whose knowledge of Islam was gleaned from a plethora of fabulous stories, travellers reports, anti-Islamic propaganda and religious vitriol. Vitkus suggests that distorted ideas about the East ‘hark back to ancient representations of Eastern empires and invading hordes that predate Islam’. Hostile and frightening depictions of Muslims were encountered in Christian pamphlets and sermons. The 1570 edition of John Foxe’s popular *Acts and Monuments* contained a section headed ‘The Historye and Tyrannye of the Turks’ which included a ‘Prayer against the Turkes’:

> these Turquishe Agarens have risen up against us […] we beseech thee (O Lord God of hosts) grant to thy church strength and victory against the

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18 Fitzgeffry, *Compassion Towards Captives*, p. 9.
19 *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (London, 1597), A3v-A4r. This anonymous text is frequently attributed to Giles Fletcher (bap.1546, d. 1611). It is dedicated to the literary patron George Carey ‘Lord Chamberlaine of the Queenes house: Captaine of her Majesties Gentlemen Pensioners’, A2r. This leads Anders Ingram to question ‘the dubious attribution sometimes made to Giles Fletcher’, ‘English Literature on the Ottoman Turks in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’ (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Durham University, 2009), pp. 107-08. See also Anders Ingram, *Writing the Ottomans: Turkish History in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
20 *The Policy of the Turkish Empire*, B4v-B5r.
22 Martin Luther wrote about the Turkish threat in *On War against the Turk* (1529) and *Appeal for Prayer against the Turks* (1541) as did John Calvin in some of his theological polemics.
23 Agarens were descendants of Ishmael through his mother, the slave-woman, Hagar. See note 10 above.
The Profession of Turcism

malicious fury of these Turks, Saracens, Tartarians, against Gog and Magog, and all the malignant rabble of Antichrist [...] prevent their devices, overthrow their power, and dissolve their kingdom [...] that they which wretchedly be fallen from thee, may happily be reduced again into the fold of thy salvation.

William Okeley, who was held captive in Algiers from 1639 to 1644, bemoaned the loss of Christian churches in Asia which were being ‘swallowed up by the Ottoman sword and the Mahumedan unbelief […] possessed with Moors and defiled with the abominations of the greatest impostor that ever seduced the nations’. Christian accounts of the dubious origins of Islam and the alleged deceptions of Muhammad combined to create an image of Islam as a false religion of thieves, renegades and apostates. Polemical tracts denigrated Islam as an evil, licentious religion which advocated violence and lust. Rev. Henry Byam (1580-1669), a Church of England clergyman, referred to Muhammad as ‘the very puddle and sinke of sin and wickedness, a thiefe, a murderer and adulterer and a Wittall’ whose licentious laws allowed his disciples to take as many Wives as they be able to keepe. And lest insatiable lust might want whereon to feed, to surfet, he alloweth divorce upon every light occasion. He [Muhammad] had himself but eleven Wives besides Whores; but the Grand-Signior in our daies kept three thousand Concubines for his lust.

24 Gog and Magog are mentioned in Ezekiel 38:15; 30:3-9 and in Revelation 20:7-8. Attempts have been made to associate these biblical references with specific places or people such as Huns, Scythians or Muslims. Alexander the Great is said to have built great iron gates to keep out these barbarian hoards. They are associated with apocalyptic literature and in medieval legend are linked to Antichrist and the armies of Satan. They also appear in the Qur'an as Yājūl and Mājūj.


26 Okeley, Ebenezer, A.8.

27 Christian anti-Islamic polemic suggested that Muhammad, together with a Nestorian Monk, Sergius, and a Jew, Abdalla, had invented a new religion. See Louis LeRoy, Of the Interchangeable Course, or Variety of Things (London, 1594), p. 98; The Policy of the Turkish Empire, p. 2; William Bedwell, Mohammedis imposturae (London, 1615).

28 LEME cites a definition of ‘sinke’ from John Florio, Queen Anna’s New World of Words (London, 1611) as ‘uncleanesse, slovenliness, beastliness, corruption. Also: the sinke of a city, the scum of the earth; the dregs of people and vile sort of men and women’.

29 LEME cites a ‘wittall’ as a cuckold who knows all or consents to his wife’s adultery.

30 The reigning sultan was Murad IV (1623-1640). Murad had only two consorts but the size of the harem increased under his reign. See Leslie P. Peirce The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 106-07.

31 The reigning sultan was Murad IV (1623-1640). Murad had only two consorts but the size of the harem increased under his reign. See Leslie P. Peirce The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 106-07.

32 Henry Byam, A Return from Argier (London, 1628), pp. 62-63. At twenty-five Muhammad was married to a wealthy forty- year-old widow, Khadija, who became the first Muslim. The marriage was monogamous until her death twenty five years later. Muhammad had eleven wives. Only one of these, Aaishah, was a virgin. See the Encyclopaedia of Islam.
Muhammad was the most familiar of all non-Christian figures known to early modern English people. For English readers Islam and Muhammad were reimagined and understood as Mahometanism and Mahomet. In his enlightening study of the mythologies of the Prophet Muhammad, Dimmock stresses that ‘Mahomet, the composite figure of Christian mythology’ was vastly distinct from the Prophet Muhammad of Muslim biographical traditions. From these biographical facts a grotesque caricature was constructed within Christianity and widely circulated throughout early modern society and presented as truth to Christian audiences. Followers of Muhammad, referred to as ‘Mussulmen’ or Mahometans, were portrayed as religious fanatics and frenzied infidels with insatiable desires whose earthly vices would be rewarded in the afterlife with eternal corporeal pleasures in a voluptuous orgiastic paradise. Daniel J. Vitkus suggests that negative, radically distorted images of Islam produced by the West were ‘imaginary

33 R. W. Southern states that the translation of the Qur’an by English scholar Robert of Ketton, completed in July 1143, gave the West the opportunity to study Islam seriously for the first time, pp. 34-37. Ketton’s Latin translation of the Qur’an, Lex Mahomet pseudo-prophete, was published by Thomas Bibiliander in Basel in 1543, Machumetis Saracenorum principis, eiusque successorum vitae, doctrina ac ipse Alcoran. He added supplementary material that had been written since Ketton’s translation and it was translated into Italian, German and Dutch. Andrea Arrivabene’s translation L’alcorano di Macometto, published in Venice in 1547, became the source of the ‘first substantial reproduction of the Alcoranic text in English’, Dimmock, Mythologies, p. 159. Ketton and Arrivabene were primary sources for Samuel Purchas, who included a synopsis of the Alcoran and ‘Mahumetan Law’ in Purchas his Pilgrimage (London, 1613), pp. 206-15. Bedwell’s Mohammedis imposturae contained an index of the Alcoran’s chapters and an Arabian Trudgman, which was a dictionary of Arabic terms. Michel Baudier’s Histoire generale de la religion des Turcs published in France in 1626 became a major source of reference for over a century. Andre du Ryer’s L’Alcoran de Mahomet (1647) was translated into English by Alexander Ross as The Alcoran of Mahomet (London, 1649); Humphrey Prideaux’s The True Nature of Imposture Displayed in the Life of Mahomet (London, (1697) went through eight English editions by 1723 and was republished in Europe and America. Henri de Boulainvillier’s La Vie de Mahomed, translated into English as The Life of Mahomet in 1731, was written to counter Prideaux’s view of Mohammed as imposter; George Sale published The Koran [...] translated into English immediately from the original Arabic in 1734. See Dimmock, Mythologies.

34 Dimmock, Mythologies, p xiv.

35 Ibid., p. xiii. Muhammad was born in 570 and orphaned by the time he was eight. He lived with his uncle Abu Taleb, travelled widely, married at twenty-five and lived in Mecca for the next fifteen years. He received his first revelation in a cave on Mount Hira. Due to harassment and hostile reaction by tribal factions to his preaching in Mecca he went into exile in Medina in 622 (the Hijra). He subsequently united various tribes and returned victorious to Mecca. Muhammad died in Medina in 632. Recent studies of Muhammad include Tarif Khalidi, Images of Muhammad: Narratives of the Prophet in Islam across the Centuries (New York: Random House, 2009); Dimmock, Mythologies; The Cambridge Companion to Muhammad, ed. by Jonathan E. Brockopp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

36 One of the earliest English works to present a less hostile view of the Islamic tradition and to acknowledge Muhammad as a prophet was Henry Stubbe’s manuscript ‘An Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahometanism: With the Life of Mahomet and a Vindication of Him and His Religion from the Calumnies of the Christians’, composed in 1671. See Henry Stubbe and the Beginnings of Islam: The Original and Progress of Mahometanism, ed. by Nabil Matar (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).
resolutions of real anxieties about Islamic wealth and might’ which developed as a result of the West’s cultural inferiority.³⁷ David R. Blanks claims that ‘by debasing the image of their rivals, Western Christians were enhancing their own self-images and trying to build self-confidence in the face of a more powerful and more culturally sophisticated enemy’.³⁸ Vitkus argues that the portrayal of Islam in early modern texts ‘bears little resemblance to the religion it purports to describe’.³⁹ Nevertheless, it was this exaggerated fabrication that was absorbed and preserved in early modern consciousness.

Motives for Conversion
Considering how Islam was viewed in the English imagination it is not difficult to understand the fear and anxiety induced by the concept of turning Turk. Nowhere was the threat of Islamic conversion more evident than in captivity. Barbary captivity was presented as the ultimate test of Christian belief. The captive Francis Brooks, who spent ten years in ‘miserable slavery’ in Morocco in the seventeenth century, summed up his sense of isolation and loss of identity:

We were not only banished from our native country (being English-men and myself born in the Ratcliff parish of Bristol), but from all the spiritual as well as temporal comforts. We were confined amongst those whose religion was composed of cruelty, whose customs were extravagant, and whose usages almost intolerable.⁴⁰

Whereas Spanish and French Catholic religious orders negotiated for the release of their captives, England had no similar designated organisation assigned to this role.⁴¹ This had catastrophic results, as is suggested in Purchas:

To the Redemption of Captives by the Orders of the Trinitie, and of Saint Marie de Mercede in Spaine and Italy, are yearly gathered about one hundred and fiftie thousand Duckets. There is no general ordinarie course for

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⁴¹ Roslyn L. Knutson notes: ‘The gathering of alms was a counterpart in early modern England to the redemptionist societies in Spain. Acting on a petition from the suppliant or a representative, the official granted a license or passport which permitted them to go from parish to parish collecting alms for the relief of some great misfortune’, ‘Elizabethan Documents, Captivity Narratives, and the Market for Foreign History Plays’, English Literary Renaissance, 26.1, (1996), 75-95 (p. 78).
Redemption of Captives of England [...] whereby men of those parts utterly disconsolate to the loss and shame of Christians, Apostatise.\(^{42}\)

Despite the general loathing of Islam many converts were gained in Barbary. There were various motivations and incentives for people to convert. Curiosity, boredom, a lack of religious foundation, prosperity, torture and temptation were all put forward as reasons for conversion. Captives were considered at risk of converting due to the ‘despair of libertie and irksomeness of daily calamities’, or the riches, fortunes and flatteries of their captors.\(^{43}\) Purchas suggested that in Barbary every year over five hundred captives became ‘Mahumetan Apostates’.\(^{44}\) In the last quarter of the fifteenth century Georgius de Hungaria (c.1422-1502), who was a captive for twenty years under the Ottomans, remarked on the problem of apostasy among Christian captives. He identified different classes of captives and the likelihood of apostasy. There were those who were interested in Muslim rituals and beliefs but who were cautious and aware of the dangers of apostasy. There were others ‘whose curiosity exceeds their good sense and intelligence and who are overborne by their own enquiries and perhaps by worldly ambition; these apostatise and often gain great advantage thereby’.\(^{45}\)

\(^{42}\) Samuel Purchas, ‘Collections out of the Voyages and Historie of Friar Joao dos Sanctos his Aethiopia Orientalis and Varia Historia …’ in Purchas His Pilgrimes in five bookes, (London, 1625), vol. II, pp. 1535-67 (p. 1565). Trinitarians and Mercedarians were redemptionist orders who redeemed captives. A Trinitarian (also known as a Mathurin) was a member of a religious teaching and nursing order for men, founded in France in 1198 by John of Matha and Felix of Valois. A Mercedarian was a member of the order of Our Lady of Mercy (also called Our Lady of Ransom) founded by St. Peter Nolasco in Barcelona in the early thirteenth century to free Christians from Muslim captivity. Maria de Medici introduced the order into France in the seventeenth century. See OED. William Okeley noted that ‘the Spaniards every year return a considerable sum of money to Algiers to be employed in the redemption of such of their own country as are there in Slavery’, p. 28.

\(^{43}\) Purchas, Purchas His Pilgrimes (1625), vol. II, p. 1565. Thomas Smith, who lived in Istanbul from 1668-1671, claims to have been asked ‘in the Portico of Sancta Sophia why will you not turn Musulman, and be as one of us?’ Smith, Remarks, p. 32. The Levant merchant John Sanderson (1560-c. 1627) states that ‘one Old Turke came & earnestly exhorted me to become a Musselman’, The Travels of John Sanderson 1584-1602, ed. by Sir William Foster, 2\(^{nd}\) series (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1931), p. 107. See also Purchas, Purchas His Pilgrimes, pp. 1614-640.

\(^{44}\) Purchas, Purchas His Pilgrimes, vol. II, p. 1565.

\(^{45}\) See J.A.B. Palmer, ‘Fr. Georgius de Hungaria, O.P., and the Tracatus de Moribus Condicionibus et Nequicia Turcorum’, Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 34 (1951), 44-68 (p.58). Georgius was captured by the Turks in 1438. During the early years of his captivity Georgius was attracted to Islam and almost succumbed to conversion. He regained his freedom in 1458 and later entered the Dominican Order. He wrote his account to warn of the dangers of Islam and to help others who became captives. From 1481 until 1550 there were seven manuscript copies, twelve imprints and eleven German translations of his anonymous account. Georgius de Hungaria is often confused with the captive Bartholomej Georgijevic who was also Hungarian. See also Albrecht Classen, ‘The World of the Turks Described by an Eye-Witness: Georgius De Hungaria’s Dialectical Discourse on the Foreign World of the Ottoman Empire’, JRMH, 7 (2003), 257-279.
The captive Francis Knight claimed to have been ‘an occulter witnesse’ to many conversions and was astounded at the effortlessness with which Englishmen abandoned their faith and worshipped Muhammad, ‘priding themselves in Turkish ceremonies and in a faith once execrable unto them’.46 William Okeley revealed how captivity deadened the mind and weakened and dulled the spirit. Wearing the Turkish habit altered captives’ identity and they became accustomed to servitude:

in time we were so habituated to Bondage, that we almost forgot Liberty, and grew stupid, and senseless of our Slavery […] Evil is the unmanned and dispiriting of the Soul to worthy Actions; for we are apt to put on the Temper and Spirit of Slaves with the Habit.47

Okeley suggests that with the passage of time captives took on the demeanour of slavery and almost forgot their freedom and former lives. He goes on to say that they were under a perpetual temptation to convert ‘to make our Souls Slaves that our Bodies might Recover Liberty’.48

In an apostasy sermon preached in 1627 Rev. Edward Kellet (1580-1641), outlined the ‘false-guides’ and ‘silly motives’ that ensnared Englishmen:

first, the example, with the perswasion of other Renegadoes: secondly, the sense and feeling of present miserie, with the feare of worse to come: thirdly, the baite and allurements of immunitie present,49 and prosperity promised.50

Against all of these entrapments travellers and captives should be fortified with religious knowledge and armed with ‘Christian Panoply’.51 Henry Blount (1602-1682) described the almost inevitable slide from Christianity to Islam for those that lacked solid religious foundation:

Many who professe themselves Christians scarce know what they mean by being so, finally perceiving themselves poore, wretched, taxed,52 disgraced, deprived of their children and subject to the intolerance of every Rascall, they

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46 Knight, A Relation of Seven Yeares Slaverie, p. 2.
47 Okeley, Ebenezer, pp. 21-22.
48 Ibid., p. 21.
49 Possibly the promise of an end to, or exemption from, present and future hardship.
50 Kellet, A Return from Argier, p. 34.
51 Ibid. Panoply is a full suit of armour.
52 A religious tax was imposed on non-Muslims (dhimmis) living in Islamic lands. Sūrah 9:29 states: ‘Fight those who believe not in God […] until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued’. William Okeley mentioned the hardship suffered by a fellow captive as a result of such tax ‘having a monthly Tax imposed upon him by his Patron, which he must scrape out where he could, and besides maintain himself, his wife and child’, Okeley, p. 19.
begin to consider and prefer the present Work, before the other which they so little understand.\textsuperscript{53}

Theological ignorance was considered to be one of the principal causes of the Christian captive’s readiness to convert to an alternative religion or to abandon his faith altogether. The antidote was a solid knowledge of the tenets of one’s religion. Instructions for travellers invariably warned of the importance of a strong grounding in religious knowledge. Clergyman William Gouge (1575-1653) urged religious instruction for all travellers who were in danger of being surprized ‘by the mortal enemies of Christians, or have occasion to abide and traffique among them’.\textsuperscript{54} Gouge set out his directions for mariners, merchants and other travellers: ‘Be well instructed in the verity, excellency, utility and necessity of that faith which yee professe; so as yee may be able to maintaine it against all adversaries. […] Take an unalterable and invincible resolution before hand to stand to thy faith and never to renounce thy profession thereof’.\textsuperscript{55}

Joseph Pitts, who was captured in 1678 at the age of fifteen and converted under duress, recommended that all parents instruct their children in the ‘principles of Christianity’. He suggested that had he possessed

as little knowledge as some have that are taken slaves, I had been for ever lost. And I am verily persuaded that many poor ignorant souls which have turned Mohammetans would never have done what they did had they been catechize as they ought: no man knows how far the benefit of a good and pious education extends.\textsuperscript{56}

It was firmly believed by Christian authorities, and confirmed by returned captives, that a thorough knowledge of one’s faith was essential as a bulwark against the onslaught of foreign influence and to protect the religious and cultural identity of the traveller. There was difficulty acknowledging that in comparison to zealous

\textsuperscript{53} Henry Blount, \textit{A Voyage into the Levant} (London, 1636), pp. 67-68. Blount, a gentleman and courtier, travelled alone through the eastern Mediterranean. At the beginning of his travel account he outlined his motives for travelling: ‘to observe the Religion, Manners and policie of the Turkes; Not perfectly (which were a task for an inhabitant rather than a passenger) but so far as might satisfy this scruple to whit whether to an impartial conceit, the Turkish way appears absolutely barbarous, as we are given to understand, or rather another kind of civility different from ours, but no less pretending’, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{54} William Gouge, \textit{A Recovery from Apostacy. Set out in a Sermon Preached in Stepny Church neere London at the Receiving of a Penitent Renegado into the Church, Octob. 21, 1638} (London, 1639), p. 57.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., pp. 57-61.

\textsuperscript{56} Pitts, \textit{A True and Faithful Account}, Preface, A7r.
Muslims, Christians were sadly lacking in religious knowledge, fervour and steadfastness.

Rather than acknowledge that Christians were freely abjuring their faith, it was claimed that many turned because they were unable to withstand the extreme tortures inflicted upon them. It was easier to accept the excuse of torture than to think that English cultural and religious identity could be turned voluntarily. Edmond Cason (d. 1654), who was sent by Parliament to Algiers to negotiate peace and to secure the release of English captives alleged that ‘divers of the English Youths bee turned Turks through beating and hard usage’. In a news pamphlet published in 1622 John Rawlins, ‘a poor sailor’ enslaved in Algiers in 1621, described how the Turks forced captives to endure severe torture and turn Turk:

They commonly lay them on their naked backs or bellies, beating them so long till they bleed at the nose and mouth, […] then they strike the teeth out of their heads, pinch them by their tongues […] many times, they lay them their whole length in the ground like a grave and so cover them with boards, threatening to starve them if they will not turn.

Francis Brooks’s ‘impartial relation’ described the ‘Barbarian cruelty’ inflicted on distressed Christian captives to make them ‘turn Moors’. Graphic images of sadistic torture had a visceral appeal and pandered to readers’ appetite for danger and suspense (Figure 2).

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58 Rawlins, The Famous and Wonderful Recovery of a Ship of Bristol, B1v. It is difficult to ascertain the extent of the torture endured by slaves in Barbary captivity. See Davis, Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters, pp. 128-35.
59 Brooks, Barbarian Cruelty, pp. 18-20.
60 Denhardt, Islamic Conversion and Christian Resistance, p. 20.
Claire Norton, concurring with Matar and Snader, suggests that the narrative trope of forced conversion through torture was a literary fiction that arose from, and constitutes ‘a response, to the power of the Islamic Maghrebi states and the fascination, lure, and fear they inspired’ in the English population. However, torture was considered to be an inadequate and lame excuse for rejecting one’s faith. In the face of extreme provocation, unwavering Christian resistance was the only acceptable outcome. Kelllet maintained martyrdom was preferable to conversion and was to be welcomed: ‘he is properly a Martyr who is tormented to the death for the word of God’.

The attractiveness and sensuous allure of Islam were other reasons proffered for its curious appeal to Englishmen. Rev. Edward Kelllet insinuated that if the Turks did not succeed in converting renegades by torture, they seduced them with alluring promises: ‘I say what those Miscreantes by such extremities could not compasse; the enticements of pleasure and worldly preferment, did worke about, on thee, to their desires’. Captive Christians could be enticed to convert by the lure of Islam, which was persistently portrayed as a dangerously attractive, libertine culture which

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63 Ibid., 39.
allowed polygamy, divorce and concubinage. According to John Pory (bap. 1572, d. 1633), in his translation of Leo Africanus, *A Geographical Historie of Africa, Written in Arabicke and Italian, by John Leo a More* (1600), Islam ‘looseth the bridle to the flesh, which is a thing acceptable to the greatest part of men’. Many Englishmen, who had been condemned to inferior conditions at home, came to Barbary seeking material gain and accepted Islam as a necessary step to their prosperity. John Rawlins wrote that renegades ‘never knew any god but their own sensual lusts and pleasures, [and] thought that any religion would serve their turns and so for preferment or wealth very voluntarily renounced their faith’. Thomas Smith (1638-1710), chaplain to the English ambassador, Sir Daniel Harvey, in Istanbul, suggested that renegades turned ‘out of desperation or a desire of living in all bestial sensuality’. He alleged that the motives for apostasy were:

- meer considerations of ease, pleasure, and prosperity, or else of vanity and guilt: for it cannot be presumed, that any thorough conviction of mind should be wrought upon to embrace the dotages and impostures of Turcisme.

For the English it was almost inconceivable that Christians would willingly embrace Islam without the incentives of pleasure and riches. Writers propagated the myth of a voluptuous East populated with seductive temptresses, and exaggerated the idea of an Islamic Paradise which allowed limitless sensual gratification and enchanted unsuspecting Christians into converting:

- the ground thereof is gould watered with streames of Milke, Hony and Wine. How there his followers after the day of judgement, shall have a merry madd world, and shall never make an end of eating, drinking, and *colling* wenches. And these […] are sweete Creatures indeed, for if one of them should spet into the Sea, all the waters thereof would become sweete. […] This is a tast of his infernall doctrine of those strange lyes and strong delusions with which he hath bewitched the world, and led men-hood-wink’t into the Abisse of perdition.

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66 Rawlins, B2r.
67 Smith, pp. 42-43.
68 Ibid., p. 16.
69 Kabbani, p. 16.
70 Colling was hugging or embracing someone about the neck. *LEME* cites Thomas Cooper, *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae* (London, 1584) ‘colling his lover about the necke’. Also John Florio, *A World of Words* (London, 1598) ‘hugging or imbracing’ or ‘armed about the necke’.
71 Kellet, p. 64.
Christian polemicists were quick to point out that sexual freedom was sanctioned by the Qur’an itself which promised that even in death believers would be rewarded in Paradise with dark-eyed hūr [houris]. Writings such as Aaron Hill (1685-1750) declared that the enjoyment of these ‘Great Ey’d Ladies’ was promised by Muhammad as ‘one of the Sublimest Joys of their Chimerical Paradise’. Blount found incredible the amount of people who were enticed away from their faith with the promises and allurements of eternal pleasure and supposed ‘that their Paradise had won many from our side’.

**Conversion Process**

Despite the disparate circumstances involved in converting to Islam, the historian Marc Baer illustrates that in official Ottoman sources it was referred to as ‘being honored by the glory of Islam’. Tijana Krstić says it was also recorded as to become a Muslim and in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries converting to Islam was ‘to embark on the right path’. Rycaut referred to it as ‘becoming a Believer’ and stated that the Ottomans regarded it as ‘a meritorious work to create Proselyts’ and anyone who could afford to buy a slave bought one young and fit ‘whome he may name his convert and gain reputation amongst his neighbours of having added to the number of the faithful’. Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq (1522-92), who claimed he was offered ‘great Honour and large Reward’ if he converted, revealed that Muslims considered it obligatory and charitable to persuade a Christian

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72 Watt, *The Influence of Islam*, p. 74. The *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an* defines houris as ‘a feminine adjective for a white skinned woman denoting the virgins of paradise. The singular is not attested in the Qur’an but the plural form (hūr) occurs four times (44:54; 52:20; 55:72; 56:22), three of which appear in connection with the adjective in meaning wide-eyed with a deep black pupil’. The *OED* describes houris as ‘a nymph of the Muslim paradise’. This corporeal paradise contrasted sharply with the Christian paradise inhabited by morally pure angels.

73 Aaron Hill, *A Full and Just Account of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1709), p. 110. Purchas suggested: ‘that hee which readeth this booke [the Qur’an] a thousand times in his life, shall have a woman in Paradise, whose eye-browes shall be as large as the raynewb’, *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (1613), p. 215.

74 Blount, pp. 67-68.

75 Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam*, p. 5.


77 Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1668) p. 47. Contrary to this Pitts reports that slave owners are ‘more in love with their money than they are with the welfare of their slaves’ and if a master ‘perceived their slaves inclinable to turn Turks’ they have them sold immediately, p.130.
to convert to their religion so as to save a soul from destruction.\textsuperscript{78} Christian conversions to Islam before the Sultan in Istanbul were recorded by the imperial secretary in black ink sprinkled with a celebratory flourish of glittering gold dust.\textsuperscript{79} For the religious convert, embarking on the right path entailed participating, willingly or otherwise, in ceremonies which affirmed internal and external transformation and acceptance of the new faith. Baer quotes the ‘Statute of the New Muslim’ (1677) which describes events at the grand vizier’s court when a Christian converted:

If an infidel [Christian] should desire to become Muslim in the presence of the sadra’zam [grand vizier] in the imperial council, at once he is instructed in the articles of the faith of Islam. After a command is ordered to the imperial treasurer for a handful of coins and clothing as gifts of kindness to be bestowed upon the convert, an usher takes and delivers him to the imperial surgeon on duty that day in the council. The surgeon immediately takes him to the designated corner and circumcises him [...]. It is an ancient statute for one of the imperial surgeons to be on call every day in the imperial council and in the palace of the sadra’zam.\textsuperscript{80}

The Statute conveys the speed and efficiency at which a Christian was converted to Islam. It was unquestionably assumed and conscientiously recorded that apostates ‘desired’ to become Muslim. The new convert received prompt religious instruction, was given gifts of clothing and was whisked away instantly to be circumcised. The imperial surgeon was to be available daily which indicates the frequency at which Christian males were converting to Islam.

Removing the garments of ‘Christian virtues’\textsuperscript{81} and draping the body in new Muslim clothing was a focal point of the conversion process, signifying the passage from one religion to another. In the late seventeenth century Thomas Smith (1638-1710), reported that clothes and turbans were ‘provided and freely bestowed’ upon those that converted.\textsuperscript{82} Marc Baer confirms that the ‘process of conversion was in

\textsuperscript{78} Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq, \textit{The Four Epistles of A.G. Busbequius, Concerning his Embassy into Turkey} (London, 1694), p. 187. Busbecq travelled to the Ottoman Empire twice between 1554 and 1562, on diplomatic missions as Emperor Ferdinand’s ambassador to Suleiman the Magnificent.
\textsuperscript{79} Baer, \textit{Honored by the Glory of Islam}, p. 197.
\textsuperscript{80} Marc Baer, ‘Islamic Conversion Narratives of Women: Social Change and Gendered Religious Hierarchy in Early Modern Ottoman Istanbul’, \textit{Gender & History}, 16 (August, 2004), 425-58 (p. 440). Abdi Pasha, who was official chronicler and also served as imperial chancellor between 1669 and 1678, was ordered by the Grand Vizier ‘to codify the statute outlining correct procedure while compiling all known Ottoman statues into a single collection of Ottoman law’. See Baer, \textit{Honored by the Glory of Islam}, p. 191.
\textsuperscript{81} Rycaut, \textit{The Present State of the Ottoman Empire}, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{82} Smith, \textit{Remarks}, p. 42.
part garment-centred’. He cites petitions to the Imperial Council and to the sultan which highlight the centrality of new garments in the conversion procedure:

God is everlasting! To the Treasurer of the Palace, may his power and glory be increased! Give new garments to a new Muslim man upon receiving the document […] of the imperial council. Recorded on August 30, 1673
And:
It was commanded that garments be given according to custom on September 4, 1686 […] Let it be the order of my sultan that garments be bestowed … to this humble servant who became honoured by the glory of Islam.

A sense of the excitement, enthusiasm and ceremonial importance generated when a Christian converted to Islam was noted in travel accounts and captivity narratives. Some describe an almost carnivalesque atmosphere, notwithstanding the severity of the circumstances surrounding the spectacle. One of the earliest references to a conversion ceremony is in an account by Richard Willes (1546-c. 1579) of a voyage to Persia in 1568:

I have here noted before that if any Christian will become a Busorman, that is, one that had forsaken his faith, and be a Mahometan of their religion, they give him many gifts and sometimes also a living. The manner is, that when the devil is entered into his heart to forsake his faith, he resorteth to the sultan or governour of the towne, to whom he maketh protestation of his devileish purpose. The governor appointeth him a horse, and one to ride before him on another horse, bearing a sword in his hand, and the Busorman bearing an arrow in his hand, and rideth in the citie, cursing his father and mother: and if ever after he returne to his own religion, he is guiltie of death, as is signified by the sword borne before him.

Willes highlights the importance of the public display of renouncing one’s former faith and familial identity, and the ominous finality of conversion. The French writer, Jean Dumont (1667-1727) provided a detailed account of the conversion of a

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83 Baer, Honored by the Glory of Islam, p. 198.
84 Ibid., pp. 196-97. According to Baer converts received the cloth and base of a white turban and could also be given footwear, trousers and waistbands. Women’s clothing included slippers and cloaks. See Baer, p. 199.
85 Richard Willes (1546-1579), poet and geographer, published the History of Travayle in 1577 which was a revision, with added material, of Richard Eden’s The Decades of the Newe Worlde (London, 1555) which was itself a translation of Pietro Martire d’Anghiera, De Orbe Novo Decades (1530). Sections of Willes’s text were included by Hakluyt in his Principal Navigations (1589; 1598-1600). See ODNB. See also Andrew Hadfield, ‘Peter Martyr, Richard Eden and the New World: Reading, Experience and Translation’, Connotations, 5.1 (1995-6), 1-22.
87 Anghiera, Pietro Martir d’, The History of Travayle, p. 335.
Genoese renegade and included an illustration depicting the convert being paraded triumphantly through the streets\textsuperscript{88} (Figure 3). The renegade, wearing his new white turban and robes was accompanied by a large, jubilant escort. Dumont stated that a collection was made to buy the apostate a suit of clothes and that ‘a whole month’ was spent learning the tenets of the Mahometan faith.\textsuperscript{89}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure3.jpg}
\caption{The Triumph of a Christian that has renounced the Faith. Jean Dumont, \textit{A New Voyage to the Levant} (London, 1696)}
\end{figure}

The captive Joseph Pitts also commented on the conversion procession and confirmed there was ‘a great deal of formality used’ and referred to the fine trappings and rich clothing given to the convert:

\begin{quote}
Now when any Person so turns \textit{Mohammetan}, he goes to the court […] and there he declares his willingness to be a \textit{Mohammetan}; upon which he is immediately accepted without demanding of him any \textit{Reason} for his so doing. After which, the \textit{Apostate} is to get on Horse-back, on a stately Steed, with a Rich Saddle and fine Trappings. He is also Richly Habited and hath a \textit{Turbant} on his Head (but to be sure, not of a Green Colour, for none durst wear their \textit{Turbants} of that Colour but such as are of \textit{Mohammet’s Blood}).\textsuperscript{90}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{88} Jean Dumont, \textit{A New Voyage to the Levant} (London, 1696), p. 335. Dumont became historiographer to Emperor Charles VI.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid, p. 335.

\textsuperscript{90} Pitts, p. 141. Nicolas de Nicolay related that ‘kinsemen of Mahomet’ wore green turbans as ‘their Prophet ware the like on his head’. He recounted that the Ottomans believed ‘it were not reasonable to cover the dishonest partes of the body with the colour which the Prophetes did weare on their heads.
The colour of the turban was an important indication of identity. Rycaut, who included an illustration of a white turban in his history of the Ottoman Empire, pointed out that ‘all people among the Turks’ are identified ‘by their head, of what Religion or Quality they are’ (Figure 4). By renouncing God, putting on the white Muslim turban and flowing robes, the Christian convert became a follower of Muhammad. According to Smith, once apostates ‘renounce their Saviour and their Christianity’ they soon ‘forget their original Country, and are no longer lookt upon as strangers, but pass for natives’.

![Figure 4. A Turban. Paul Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1668)](image)

Travellers were alarmed to see their fellow countrymen turbaned and lost to their homeland and faith. George Sandys (1578-1644), writer and traveller, declared woefully that it was ‘a sight full of horror and trouble’ to see Christians ‘crooked

And therefore is no more permitted unto the Turkes to weare green hose [...] and whosoever should weare them, shuld be esteemed amongst them as an heretike’, *The Navigations, Peregrinations and Voyages made into Turkie by Nicholas Nicholay*, trans. Thomas Washington (London, 1585), p. 108. George Sandys warned that green was Mahomet’s colour and ‘if a Christian out of ignorance wear green, he shall have his clothes torn off from his back, and perhaps be well beaten’, *A Relation of a Journey Begun an. Dom. 1610* (London, 1615), p. 63. Dumont claimed it would be unsafe for Christians to wear green in Istanbul but he said he had often seen them ‘make bold with that sacred Colour’, p. 283.

92 Smith, *Remarks*, p. 45.
with age, & trembling with palsies\(^\text{93}\); who by their throwing away of their bonnets, and lifting up of their forefingers,\(^\text{94}\) did proffer themselves to become *Mahometans*.\(^\text{95}\) In order to deter future apostates Sandys may be suggesting that the attractions, wealth and pleasure of Islam were not as lucrative as supposed and that many Christians endured a pitiful existence after their conversion.

Blount deduced that most Christians turned, not on points of doctrine, nor for eternal reward, but for more immediate worldly reasons.\(^\text{96}\) He reached the conclusion that the motives for apostasy were of little importance. The fact remained that countless Englishmen were turning to Islam: ‘seeing how many daily go from us to them, and how few of theirs to us, it appears of what consequence the prosperity of a cause is to draw men upon it’.\(^\text{97}\) The important thing was to limit the damage that could be done to English society by those that ‘turned Turk’.

**Reintegrating the Apostate**

There was intense paranoia that renegades, bearing ‘the Marke of the Beast’, might slip back into their communities without acknowledging or repenting for their apostasy.\(^\text{98}\) The renegade was considered a liminal, chameleon-like creature, able to adapt effortlessly to his surroundings, disregarding cultural and religious boundaries:

> But such are among us, though not of us; such as are to choose Religion; 
> *Ambo-dexters, Nullifidians*,\(^\text{99}\) such *Amphibia*, as can live, both on Land and Water, or such as have stayned their soules with some blacke sinnes: these are the Chamelions which will change colour with every ayre, and their belief, for matters of small moment.\(^\text{100}\)

In England the Church played a pivotal role in reintegrating the renegade into society. Mark Netzloff suggests that the invisible threat of returning apostates was

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93 Palsy is a paralysis or tremors. It could also be a reference to the ‘falling sickness’ of which Muhammad was alleged to suffer.
94 Raising the forefinger of the right hand accompanies the affirmation of faith, the shahada. It symbolises the oneness of Allah. This will be discussed further below.
95 Sandys, *A Relation of a Journey Begun an. Dom. 1610*, p. 56. Sandys travelled to the Levant in 1610 and returned to England in 1612. He dedicated his travel narrative to Prince Charles. There were nine editions from 1615 to 1673. See *ODNB*.
96 Blount, p. 113.
97 Ibid., p. 113.
98 Kellet, p. 74.
99 An ambidexter is a double dealer who is equally ready to act on either side. A nullifidian is one who has no faith. See *OED*.
100 Kellet, p. 35.
rendered as a ‘form of collective guilt’. Preaching, the ‘foundational work of Christian ministry’, proved to be a highly efficient tool in both quelling and fuelling cultural anxiety and controlling the religious identity of the congregation. Sermons occupied a central place in Protestant worship providing moral instruction, promoting righteousness and denouncing sinfulness. The ringing of a ‘sermon bell’ after prayer services called the congregation to listen to an hour long oratory, timed by an hourglass close to the pulpit. Using classical rhetoric, preachers delivered compelling interpretations of biblical texts and applied these morals to their listeners’ lives. The sermon afforded opportunity to examine one’s conscience, admit and repent one’s sin and prepare for receiving the Eucharist. Some sermons were used to condemn the practice of conversion to Islam, to ensure proper reconversion for renegades and to frighten others into confession and penance.

Occurrences of renegades confessing and returning to the Christian faith were rare as Paul Rycaut suggested later in the century: ‘We have few examples of those Apostates who return from the Mahometan to the Christian faith; for none dares own such a Conversion but he who dares to dye for it’. However, if a returned renegade confessed and wished to be reinstated in the Church of England there was certain penitential procedures to be followed. Re-entering the church and returning to Christianity was designed as a public event attended and witnessed by a full congregation.

In the port town of Minehead in Somerset during Lent in the year

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104 During the reign of Elizabeth I, 1,200 sermons were printed. See Peter McCullough, ‘Sermons’, in *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose 1500-1640*, ed. by Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 550-75 (p. 550). McCullough suggests that James I’s reign was the ‘halcyon days of sermon-centred Protestantism’ and that the sermon was the ‘pre-eminent literary genre at the Jacobean Court’. Peter McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 2, 125. See also *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, ed. by Peter McCullough and others.
105 McCullough, ‘Sermons’, in *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose 1500-1640*, p. 568. Sermons were preached in parish churches, cathedrals, the court, universities or from outdoor pulpits.
106 Ibid., p. 566.
107 Matar, *Islam in Britain*, p. 65. Other sermons were designed to raise funds for the redemption of captives or to commemorate the return of ransomed captives. See Charles Fitzgeffry, *Compassion towards Captives*; and William Berriman, *A Sermon preached at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, December 4, 1721* (London, 1722).
109 This necessity for a public display of religious affirmation recalls the *ars apodemica* essays that instructed the traveller, upon repatriation, to demonstrate his affiliation to his church and state. See
1627 two explicitly tailored sermons were preached, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon, at the request of William Laud (1573-1645), then bishop of Bath and Wells.\footnote{For more on Laud see Nicholas Tyacke, Aspects of English Protestantism, c. 1530-1700 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); H.R. Trevor Roper, Archbishop Laud, 1573-1645, 3rd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1988); Charles Carlton, Archbishop William Laud (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987).} The occasion was the return of an un-named English apostate, who, while still in his Turkish garb, confessed to his sin of apostasy and sought re-admittance to his mother Church. These sermons, the first to commemorate and acknowledge an apostate’s confession, were preached by two Church of England clergymen, Rev. Edward Kellet and Rev. Henry Byam and published together as A Return from Argier (1628).\footnote{Both men were supporters of Laud.} They describe the circumstances leading up to the preaching of the two sermons:

A countryman of ours going from the Port of Mynhead in Sommersetshire, bound for the streights, was taken by Turkish Pyrats, and made a slave at Argier, and living there in slaverie, by frailty and weakenesse, forsooke the Christian Religion, and turned Turke, and lived so some yeares; and in that time serving in a Turkish Ship, which was taken by an Englishman of warre, was brought backe againe to Mynhead, where being made to understand the grievousnesse of his Apostacy, was very penitent for the same, desired to be reconciled to the Church, unto which he was admitted by the authority of the Lord Bishop of that Dioces, with advice of some great and learned Prelates of this Kingdome, and was enjoyed pennance for his Apostacy: and at his admission, and performance thereof, these two Sermons were Preached.\footnote{Kellet and Byam, A Return from Argier, n.p.}

The message of Byam’s sermon was ‘Repent, and doe thy first workes’. He described the ‘Turke’ as the ‘very scourge and plague of Christendome and Hammer of the world’ whose mission was to ‘mangle, murder, [and] wallow in the blood of Innocents’.\footnote{Byam, p. 64.} He admonished the apostate for converting rather than becoming a martyr to his faith: ‘youth and torments, and whatever else may be alleged, do somewhat lessen and extenuate the sinne but they cannot cleare the conscience. We are bound without fainting to resist unto the death’.\footnote{Ibid., p. 76.} Nevertheless Byam stressed that the Church was always ready to receive those who returned. Kellet stated emphatically that his sermon was not only for the good of the apostate’s soul but also
‘for the terror of others [...] and that others may avoide the like’.\textsuperscript{115} He wondered whether ‘Diverse present, have runne the same course with the delinquent (though it cannot be proved as yet)’.\textsuperscript{116} Kellet, quoting Philippians 2:12-13, suggested that the apostate should labour for the rest of his life to ‘worke out his salvation, with feare and trembling’.\textsuperscript{117} Those in the congregation who had not publicly acknowledged their sins were to make their knees as hard as horn with kneeling; to cry and call to God till they grow hoarse; to weep till their eyes be blood shot; to hunger and thirst after mercy, to gape and gaspe after comfort; and when they have done all these things, or the like deeds of mortification, they would be more willing than they are now, to humble themselves to our Church, and by her absolution, either receive Pardon from God, or, (if it be before received) Increase of Grace Spirituall.\textsuperscript{118}

Penance was cathartic and vital for the rehabilitation and reintegration of the apostate and for the overall good of the community.

Ten years later, in Stepney, London, a renegade, Vincent Jukes,\textsuperscript{119} confessed his sin of apostasy, first to his curate, then to the vicar and finally to Archbishop Laud. Upon the instructions of Laud, William Gouge (1575-1653) preached a sermon \textit{A Recovery from Apostacy} (1639) to allow Jukes back to his church. Gouge, a Church of England clergyman and religious writer, was a staunch defender of Calvinist orthodoxy and an unlikely advocate of Laud.\textsuperscript{120} Gouge pointed to the

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\textsuperscript{115} Kellet, pp. 17-18. \\
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p. 40. \\
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., p. 45. \\
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 45. \\
\textsuperscript{119} For more on Jukes see Richard Gough, \textit{The Antiquities and Memoirs of Myddle} (London: 1700); Richard Gough, \textit{A History of Myddle}, ed. David Hey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981). ‘Thomas Jukes had three sons, and never a good one. Vincent, the eldest son, was an active, nimble man; he went to be a seaman, and was taken prisoner by the Turks, of Tangiers, and another Englishman, his companion. These two, after some time, changed their religion (if they had any before), and became Turks, and so got more favour and liberty than other slaves. After some time, these two were sent a roveing in a small vessel, and only eight Turks in their company; and these two, watching an opportunity, when the Turks were all under deck, shut down the hatches, and kept them there, and hoisted up sail for England; and meeting with some English merchants, they got relief and soe brought the little vessel to England, the put the Turks on shoare, and sold the vessel. Vincent Jukes bought a new suite of cloaths, and a good horse, and came down to Myddle, and was there at what time they were singing ballads abroad in Market towns of this adventure. He went after to sea again, and was heard of no more’, p. 115. \\
\textsuperscript{120} Gouge’s celebrated sermons, preached on Sundays and Wednesdays, attracted huge congregations. In the 1620s Gouge was a member of a committee known as the feoffees, which Laud suspected of having Puritan sympathies detrimental to the church. In a letter to Laud in 1631 Gouge defended his position and, uncharacteristically, professed his appreciation of Laud. For the remainder of Laud’s term as archbishop Gouge maintained a low profile. See \textit{ODNB}. \\
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‘special occasion’ of this sermon and stressed that this was ‘no ordinary case’.121 He indicated that there was ‘a solemn, pious, and grave forme of Penance prescribed for admitting him againe into the Christian Church’.122 This is probably the ritual involved in a ‘A Form of Penance and Reconciliation of a Renegado or Apostate from the Christian Religion to Turcism’, which was instigated by Archbishop Laud in 1637 for the reincorporation of returned apostates to the Church.123 While Gouge publicly addressed Jukes, gave his biographical details and cited his crime, there is no evidence to suggest that Jukes underwent the three-week ritual required by the Laudian rite. Gouge chose Luke verse 15:31, ‘He was lost, and is found’ and applied it to the circumstances of the sermon: ‘The Dammage of Apostacy’, and ‘The Advantage of Penitency’.124 Incorporating the parable of the Prodigal Son, ‘a Historicall Parable which is full of trouble and confusion throughout the greatest part of it, but endeth with a joyful issue’, Gouge began his sermon by deploying tropes to great effect and setting it up like a theatrical performance:

The place whereon it was represented, is the Church. […] The Persons mentioned therein are, God himselfe, […] A Penitent Apostate and a Justiciary Professour, […] Lewd tempters and inciters to evill, […] A covetous worldling […] Hard-hearted Neighbors, […] Obedient Servants, […] Sympathizing Friends, […] Most of the forementioned Persons are brought in performing severall parts. The distinct parts are five.125

By creating an illusory theatrical scene with distinctive parts and acts, Gouge attempted to capture the attention of his audience and reinforce the message of his sermon. Given Gouge’s puritanical ethic and denunciation of liturgical props and rituals, his method of presentation of this sermon is unusual. However, preachers did use their sermons as a form of performance, with acts, scenes, specific characters and a narrative progression culminating in a climatic finale which would resonate with the congregation for some time afterwards.

In his extensive study of popular culture Peter Burke suggests that the performance of rituals was a way for the community to express its hostility to

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121 Gouge, p. 1. Gouge refers in his sermon to the renegade who had been received in the church at ‘Minhead in Somerset-shire’ ten years earlier, p. 41.
122 Ibid., p. 6.
124 Gouge, p. 9.
125 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
individuals who stepped out of line and to discourage other breaches of custom and promote community solidarity. According to Burke, ceremonies and rituals may have served the function of social control. Netzloff suggests that ‘rituals of conversion and incorporation were used to reify cultural borders’ and that apostasy sermons ‘demonstrate the employment of spatialized rituals to offset fears regarding the potential of travel and exchange to subvert cultural borders’. The performance of rituals offered a mode of control over the threat of encroaching influences.

The Laudian Rite was a ceremony which continued over three consecutive Sundays. Before a renegade could undergo this penitential ceremony and be reconciled to his church he had to be convicted by an ecclesiastical court. Frequent discussion with the renegade was required to discover the ‘heinousness of his sin both in respect of God, the Church, and his own soul’. An excommunication order would then be decreed and proclaimed in the cathedral and sent to the local minister to ensure that his penance and reconciliation were properly performed. This order was to be publicly announced in the parish church at Sunday morning prayer. The rite itself commenced with the public shaming of the apostate, who had to stand ‘in a penitent fashion’ outside the church door. His humiliation was compounded by being clothed in ‘a white sheet and with a white wand in his hand, his head uncovered, his countenance dejected’. The public wearing of a white sheet derived from the penitential rite prescribed for adulterers and those who were sexually promiscuous. This reinforces the association of turning Turk with sexual transgression.

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127 Netzloff, pp. 73-74.
130 Ibid., p. 362. See also Giles Milton, *White Gold: The Extraordinary Story of Thomas Pellow and North Africa’s One Million European Slaves* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2005), p. 160. The wand or rod represented an instrument of punishment. See OED ‘a rod, stick, or switch for chastisement’. The rod may also have reminded the congregation of the colloquialism ‘to make a rod for one’s own back’ which suggested that the renegade was the author of his own misfortune.
When the parishioners passed by the penitent apostate he was to sink to his knees and ‘crave their prayers and acknowledge his offence’. In an effort to ease the apostate’s reintegration into the community, Laud warned that ‘boys and idle people’ must not harass him. This highlights the tenuous boundary between re-acceptance into the community and public shame. On the second Sunday the apostate again stood in the church doorway in his penitential habit but during the service was led in by a churchwarden to the ‘west side of the font of the said church’ where he was to ‘penitently kneel’ until after the second lesson. He was then to make a public submission and beg God’s mercy for his ‘heinous and horrible sin’ after which he was to ‘smite his breast three times’ and ‘in an humble and devout manner, kiss the bottom stone of the font’ and retreat once again to the church porch.

On the third Sunday, still wearing his penitential habit, the apostate stood near the minister’s pew in the body of the church. Before the general profession of faith, the minister reminded the apostate, and the congregation, of the foulness of his sin and asked the penitent to declare his remorse and seek forgiveness, which he duly did by reciting a protracted text. The priest repeated his request, after which the penitent faced eastward, knelt with his head bowed to the ground, praised God and beseeched His mercy and that of the congregation. The priest then laid his hand on the apostate’s head, absolved him of his sin and removed his white sheet and wand. The apostate is then referred to as ‘brother’ indicating that he was once again a member of his community and would be ‘admitted to the holy sacrament’.

Matar suggests that the ‘visual and socially interactive model which Laud introduced’ may have been appealing to early modern congregations. Degenhardt states that the threat of conversion ‘demanded physical and material countermeasures in order to enact its resistance or reversal’. There was a theatrical element to the Laudian rite which would have held the attention of the audience and remained with them after the ceremony. Certainly it was in keeping with Laud’s campaign for the greater use of ritual in church services. Netzloff points to the spatial terms in which

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132 Vitkus, Piracy, p. 362.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid., p. 366.
137 Matar, Islam in Britain, p. 70.
138 Degenhardt, p. 125.
the penitent’s reintegration into the church was represented. From the periphery of the church and outside its protection, the penitent is gradually received back, physically and spiritually, into the bosom of his church. His journey, both spatial and temporal, is symbolic of his turning from his faith and his acceptance back into the Christian faith.

Although sermons were primarily delivered orally, many preachers were anxious that their message reach beyond the immediate congregation and be disseminated far and wide. Rev. Charles Fitzgeffry was adamant that his sermon for ‘the redemption of Christians from the bondage of Infidels’ would not just be heard by a few but rather that it be published and promulgated throughout England and read by the compassionate Christian reader. He declared it was not his intention that his words ‘be buried within the walls where they first breathed’ but that they should ‘travel over the whole land where they might gain admittance and acceptance’. Gouge also wished to see his words in print. He stated that he would rather ‘leave an appetite in his Auditory, then to glut them’ but by publishing his sermon he could elaborate on the important points of his oratory. He outlined his reasons for personally recording and publishing his sermon:

- to prevent the publishing of other copies taken at the Preaching thereof by such as have skill of Brachygraphie of whom some attempted in the Authors name to publish their owne notes. Many have beene much wronged hereby: and that by the Short-riters omissions, aditions, mis-placings, mistakings.

Gouge was anxious that his words would not be misinterpreted or misconstrued by those in the congregation who would plagiarize his sermon and publish their scribbled interpretations under his name.

Preachers were acutely aware that the general public was in need of guidance and direction if the threat of foreign contamination was to be overcome:

- much more have the halfe-learned, and the unlearned, need of counsaile, comfort, reprehension, of the spiritual foode of the Body and Bloud of our Lord; [...] That God had given the guidance of soules to the Ministers of the

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139 Netzloff, p. 79.
140 Fitzgeffry, sig. **1
141 Ibid., sig. *2.
142 Brachygraphie is an abbreviated writing or shorthand.
143 Gouge, A3. Kellet had also complained that some passages in his sermon had been removed or altered.
Church, who have a true Ministeriall Power, to remit Sinnes, and to inflict Penitentiall Punishments.\textsuperscript{144}

These punishments were not to be so severe as to discourage the renegade to confess his sin of apostasy. Gouge was anxious to stress that the Church was far more lenient and accepting of apostates than it had been in the past:

Indeed the ancient discipline of the Church about receiving such as had Apostatised from her, [...] was more austere then now it is [...] In those days Penitents were wont to put sack-cloth upon their backs, and ashes on their heads: And to stand as men condemned, with their countenance detected; yea and with such sorrow and wailing to cast themselves downe at the Bishops feete [...] But now the Church dealeth much more gently and gratiously with such as she conceiveth to be true Penitents.\textsuperscript{145}

To entice reluctant apostates who may have been afraid of falling victim to the wrath of crusading ministers or to austere punishments and chastisements, the Church is portrayed as a benevolent entity, warmly welcoming the returning penitent into her fold.

While these sermons were preached for individual renegades, Gouge hinted at the hidden scale of the problem. He wondered ‘are these two the tenth or tenth of ten times ten of them that having played the Renegadoes are returned into their countrey, yet never gave any publike evidence of their true repentance’.\textsuperscript{146} This is indicative of the speculation and concern surrounding the sheer number of suspected apostates and the possibility of unrepentant renegades returning to their English communities.

The apostate came to represent the dangerous permeability of identity and testified to the ways in which travel, captivity and cultural exchange could potentially destabilize English society from within. To turn to the ‘profession of Turcism’ was to submit to a total transformation of one’s religious and cultural being. Religious conversion, as Baer suggests, was one of the most unsettling and threatening occurrences in the life of a society.\textsuperscript{147} Sermons and symbolic ceremonies helped to unite the community in a show of solidarity that reaffirmed English identity and the triumph of Christianity over Islam. To regain his Christian identity the apostate was expected to publicly ‘cast off his barbarous barbarian habit and

\textsuperscript{144} Kellet, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{145} Gouge, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{147} Baer, \textit{Honored by the Glory of Islam}, pp. 15-16.
[put] on a Christian resolution’. While this may have been largely symbolic it draws attention to the fact that hidden beneath the apostate’s foreign attire lay an undeniable symbol of apostasy. The defining cut of circumcision, the subject of the next chapter, sparked curiosity, fear and condemnation.

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148 Kellet, A Return from Argier, p. 77.
Chapter 2

‘Cleane cutte of[ff]’: Circumcision and the loss of religious and cultural identity in early modern captivity narratives

The anthropologist Mary Douglas suggests that ‘the body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious’. In early modern culture, individual parts of the body were elevated to a position of central significance and afforded attributes of agency and subjectivity. Specific body-parts became complex sites invested with meaning. According to David Hillman and Carla Mazzio this ‘creates, in the corporeal fragment, a remarkable density of implication’. They assert that ‘the negotiation between parts and wholes thus became an especially vexed issue in the somatic structures of early modern Europe’. Mary Fissell suggests that the body is both ‘intensely individual and a collective representation, an image of the social world shared by its inhabitants’. Due to the vulnerability felt by Englishmen in their contacts with Muslims and as a result of the intimidating act of circumcision the foreskin became a complex site, endowed with exceptional meaning and significance. For those in Barbary captivity who faced conversion to Islam and the threat of circumcision, it came to represent their Christianity and their Englishness. Penetrating the personal boundaries and defiling the private parts of an Englishman’s body was an attack not only on the individual but it had wider ramifications and implications for English society. The loss of the foreskin was not merely a physical mutilation. In Western thought it was a permanent, irreversible sign, a symbol of membership of a foreign culture and affiliation to an alien religion with strange beliefs and practices. To be circumcised into the Muslim faith was to forsake all the benefits of Christianity and Englishness and to bear an indelible mark on the body of

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1 Douglas, Purity and Danger, p. 142.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., p. xiii. Hillman and Mazzio explain that ‘the rhetorical trope in which these relations are configured (and disfigured) is synecdoche, a term that signifies the way in which a part is “taken for” a whole’, p. xiii.
apostasy. Through circumcision one became irreversibly ‘Other’. Hillman and Mazzio have shown that in the early modern period aspects of culture were ‘imagined to reside in, on and about individual parts of the body’. For returned captives the retention of the foreskin was vital proof of their identity and their cultural and religious intactness.

Circumcision was seen as a powerful act that could not only disfigure an Englishman’s body but could also break down the borders of religion, identity and gender. This chapter will focus primarily on the concerns raised by the threat of Islamic circumcision and conversion for those travelling or held captive in Muslim territory. After briefly tracing the history of circumcision I will consider the medical questions that concerned early modern physicians about the foreskin and its removal. The practice of circumcision stimulated intense curiosity and was overlaid with an emphatic sense of otherness. Travellers who visited the Jewish quarters of European cities and were lucky enough to witness a circumcision ceremony meticulously described the details of this unfamiliar ritual. In order to gain a sense of how topical circumcision was as an issue I will examine some of their eye-witness descriptions before looking at accounts of Islamic circumcision and conversion ceremonies reported on by captives. As Barbary captivity was deeply associated with apostasy and circumcision, a central trope of captivity narratives was the gruesome account of the forced conversion of their fellow Christians. Circumcision and castration were misunderstood and regularly confused but both were deemed to have emasculating and effeminate effects. Interestingly, those captives who claimed to have been forced to ‘turn Turk’, and later recorded their experiences, described the conversion procedure but downplayed the circumcision aspect of their transformation. It was the imperceptible aspect of circumcision that sparked the concern of preachers and society’s moral guardians.

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7 Hillman, p. xi.
9 This will be discussed further in the chapter.
10 Captives Joseph Pitts and Thomas Pellow ‘turned Turk’ during their captivity. They are considered in greater detail below.
11 Whether or not a returned captive had been circumcised was not easily discernible.
A brief history of circumcision

Male circumcision is a subject that has been discussed and described by authors and philosophers extending back to Herodotus, Strabo and Pythagoras. Myth, tradition, legend and folklore combine to make circumcision a subject of enduring controversy and speculation. Eric Silverman suggests that the anthropology of male circumcision and all penile practices is fraught with ethnocentric perils of revulsion, admiration and exoticism. There are various explanations offered for why circumcision is performed. It has been suggested that it is a rite of passage, a symbol of reception into a tribal or religious community, a religious rite related to fertility or an act of purification that cleanses society by reducing sexual pleasure. David Gollaher emphasises that because circumcision is steeped in multifarious meanings and is prevalent in a wide variety of cultures, both ancient and modern, it has ‘confounded attempts to construct a universal theory’. J. Bland-Sutton suggests that circumcision ‘differs from all other recognized surgical procedures in possessing among many races and tribes of men a ceremonial value’. Circumcision is performed at different ages within different religious and cultural groups. Arnold Van Gennep found that the rite of circumcision was linked with an alteration in the initiated person’s social position and signified the individual’s permanent inclusion in a distinct religious or social group.

The Egyptians practised circumcision as a totemic rite invested with social and religious significance. In Western culture circumcision is identified as a Jewish

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14 Gollaher, p. 71.


17 One version of the history of creation contained in the Book of the Dead reads: ‘They are the drops of blood which came froth from the phallus of Ra when he went forth to perform mutilations upon
tradition stretching back to the cutting of God’s covenant into Abraham’s flesh in the Book of Genesis:

This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male child among you shall be circumcised;
And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.¹⁸

At the nub of this sacred contract was the promise, in Genesis 17:2, of prolific fertility: ‘And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly’. The monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam share the same Abrahamic lineage and prophets, and are governed by scripture handed down in the Torah, the Bible and the Qur’an.¹⁹ In Christian typology Jews and Muslims were the descendants of Abraham, bound together through Isaac and Ishmael.²⁰ Jews are circumcised in infancy at eight days old²¹ while Muslims circumcise when a boy is older, between eight and thirteen years old. In the early seventeenth century Samuel Purchas contradicted the prevalent view that the Jews were the original people to use circumcision, and he noted that circumcision was practised by ‘many Nations, of whom there was never any suspicion that they descended from the Israelites’.²² In the Old Testament ‘uncircumcised’ is a term that is used contemptuously. In Ezekiel 32 the wicked are doomed to lie with the uncircumcised in ‘the recesses of the Pit’. Only the circumcised could inherit the kingdom of God.

In his radical reinterpretation of the Old Testament, St. Paul declared that circumcision was not necessary for those embracing Christianity. In his letter to the Galatians 5:6 he declared ‘For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.’ Faith rather than

¹⁸ Genesis 17:10-12. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised. His son Ismael, circumcised on the same day, was thirteen. Genesis 17:24-27. Christians celebrated the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ on January 1, eight days after the Feast of Christ’s Birth. Christians rejected circumcision in the first century.
¹⁹ In Islam they are termed ‘people of the Book’.
²¹ Genesis 21:4: ‘Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him’.
²² Purchas, Purchas His Pilgrimes, (1625), 1, p. 121.
circumcision was deemed the correct path to attain eternal salvation. Through faith alone God’s covenant with Abraham would be honoured, as St. Paul makes clear in Romans 4.13: ‘For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith’. St. Paul further reinterpreted the difference between physical and spiritual circumcision.  

Drawing on Deuteronomy 30.6 and 10.16 (‘Circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer […] And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart’), he distinguished between inward and outward circumcision, the symbolic circumcision of the heart and the circumcision of the flesh. St. Paul reasoned that Christ’s sacrifice had saved Christians from original sin; therefore they did not require a physical cutting of the flesh but rather could gain moral strength from a symbolic circumcision of the heart. 

Early modern perceptions of circumcision were strongly influenced by St. Paul’s teaching on the subject. The anonymous author of *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* summed up the downgrading in status of circumcision ‘that the same is nowe converted from a holy and sacred sacrament, to a most idle and vaine ceremony’. 

In contrast to the circumcision of the heart promoted by St. Paul, the Islamic circumcision of the flesh was seen as a defiant opposition to Christianity. In the early modern period various misconceptions circulated about the origins of Islamic circumcision, with numerous explanations put forward as to whether or not Muhammad had ordered that his followers be circumcised and whether it was mentioned in the Qur’an. The author of *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* suggested that they ‘use Circumcision as a special token or marke of their fond and superstitious sect’. Writing from Istanbul in the later seventeenth century the diplomat Paul Rycaut (1629-1700) attempted to give a historically accurate account:

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23 Gollaher, p. 31.
26 *The Policy of the Turkish Empire*, p. 22.
27 In the Bible and in early modern usage the word flesh referred to the penis.
28 Circumcision is not mentioned in the Qur’an but in the hadith. Hadith are accounts of what the Prophet did or said. It is recognised in the hadith that circumcision belongs to pre-Islamic traditions. See *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, http://brillonline.nl.
29 *The Policy of the Turkish Empire*, p. 22.
mans obedience to the more necessary parts of the Law. This rite of Circumcision is not received by them as an Article of Precept delivered expressly from the Alchoran, but by tradition and ancient practice and use amongst the Arabians […] derived originally from Ishmael or Esau.\footnote{Rycaut, The Present State of the Ottoman Empire, p. 157. He travelled to Istanbul in 1660 as secretary to the ambassador Heneage Finch. Rycaut was appointed consul to Smyrna in 1667 and returned to England in 1668. He became well-known in his lifetime for his extensive works on the Ottoman Empire. The biblical reference alludes to Esau, who was the son of Isaac and Rebecca. His twin brother was Jacob.}

Guillaume Joseph Grelot (c.1630- c.1680), an artist and traveller who spent time in Istanbul, suggested that Mohammad included no ‘injunction in his Alcoran’ concerning circumcision, but it was a thing by him afterwards appointed, finding that he had many followers, to distinguish his party from the Christians who never Circumcis’d, and the Jews who Circumcis’d after another fashion.\footnote{William Joseph Grelot, A Late Voyage to Constantinople, trans. J. Philips (London, 1683), p. 174. Grelot’s Relation nouvelle d’un voyage de Constantinople was published in 1680 in France. The differences between Islamic and Jewish circumcision are discussed below.}

Grelot suggested that Islamic circumcision was instituted primarily as a mark of distinction setting Muslims apart from Christians, whose initiation rite was baptism, and Jews who used a more elaborate and protracted ritual of circumcision to seal their covenant.\footnote{Accounts of Jewish circumcision revealed that it involved the added rituals of metsitsah and peri’ah. These practices were probably introduced during the Talmudic period but were not universally practised. See Shapiro, p. 116. Jewish circumcision was performed eight days after birth by a professional mohel. William Waterman in his translation of Johannes Boemus alleged that the Jews, who were ‘given unto leachery, and yet abstaining from the embrasings of the stranger’, devised circumcision to set them apart from other nations. William Waterman, The Fardle of Facions (London, 1555), 14v-15r.} To outsiders, circumcision remained cloaked in obscurity. Throughout the early modern period physicians, surgeons and thinkers strove to comprehend this cultural enigma.\footnote{Gollaher, p. xi.}

**Medical Information**

The practice of circumcision by Muslims, Jews or distant, unfamiliar peoples was a source of curiosity and fascination for early modern society, and was possibly the most misunderstood and misrepresented of all the rites reported on by outside observers. It was a ceremony immersed in theological, physical and sexual concerns, and shrouded in secrecy, suspicion and innuendo. It was referred to in frightening
terms such as ‘the cutting of prickes’ and performed with intimidating implements such as ‘foreskin clippers’. The author of *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (1597) remarked that circumcision was nothing more ‘but a cutting away of the foreskinne of the flesh of a man in his secret parts’, but there was considerable confusion and concern about the effects of depriving a man of the foreskin of his ‘yard’. John Bulwer (*bap.*1606, *d.*1656), medical practitioner and author, considered circumcision an ‘Artificial deformity’ and ‘a very ancient device practiced to the diminution of the naturall comeliness of this part’. Casting aspersions on the spiritual origins of Islamic circumcision, Bulwer derogatorily suggested that circumcision was introduced as a matter of superstition or for cleanliness so that ‘the whole body might be kept more pure and clean and that no soil or filth should be hid in the foreskin’. He concluded that any cleanliness acquired by circumcision was ‘but a supposed benefit, not worth so shamefull and odious an endeavour’. Bulwer, quoting sources from antiquity as well as travellers’ accounts, suggested several other possible reasons for circumcision:

> For the better prevention of the disease called the Carbuncle, [...] that they might be more apt to Generation, [...] circumcision helpeth to bridle and restraine inordinate lust and concupiscence of the flesh, but the contrary doth appeare; for no Nation is more given to carnall lust than the Egyptians, Saracens, and Turkes that are Circumcised.

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34 On an expedition up the Gambia River in 1620, Richard Jobson, merchant and traveller, witnessed the circumcision of pubescent boys. He emphasised the circumcision was carried out without any religious ceremony and was referred to merely as the ‘cutting of prickes’, *The Golden Trade or, A discovery of the river Gambra, and the golden trade of the Aethiopians*, pp. 113-114. Jobson’s account was edited and published by Samuel Purchas in *Purchas his Pilgrimes In five books* (London, 1625), II, p. 925.


36 *The Policy of the Turkish Empire*, p. 21.

37 Bulwer, *Anthropometamorphosis* (1650), p. 211. A second edition, with woodcuts, was published in 1653 with a third edition published in 1654 as *A View of the People of the Whole World*. Bulwer also published three books on deafness and communication: *Chirologia: or The Natural Language of the Hand* (1644); *Philocophus; or the Deafe and Dumbe Man’s Friend* (1648) and *Pathomyotomia, or a Dissection of the significative Muscles of the Affections of the Minde* (1649). Biographical details for Bulwer are scarce. He was the son of Thomas Bulwer, a London apothecary. His marriage to the ‘widow Midleton’ was childless but he had an adopted daughter, Chirothea Johnson. Evidence suggests he was educated at Oxford and was a member of a social circle with royalist sympathies. See Mary B. Campbell, *Wonder and Science: Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 221-56. See also *ODNB*.


39 Ibid., p. 211.

40 A carbuncle is an inflamed ulcer. In a *World of Words* (London, 1598) John Florio describes it as ‘a pock, a plague sore, a bile, a botch, a swelling in any part of the body’. See *LEME*.

41 Bulwer, *Anthropometamorphosis* (1650), p. 211.
Although purporting to give authoritative medical facts, Bulwer could not resist a proverbial attack on the sexual appetite and deviance of non-Christians. In referring to the ‘inordinate lust and concupiscence of the flesh’ Bulwer draws on Philo Judaeus, St. Aquinas and the twelfth-century Jewish writer, Moses Maimondes. Authors and medical experts linked circumcision with the excision of sexual pleasure but when associated with Muslims circumcision was equated with sexual incontinence and the necessity of restricting rampant desire and the reduction of pleasure.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, knowledge about reproduction and the organs of generation was scanty, uncertain and unreliable. The church attempted to control medical knowledge and regulate sexual behaviour, with theologians delivering moralizing sermons to congregations amongst whom most sexual and medical information was communicated verbally. Increasingly, information on human anatomy, reproduction and sexual function was influenced by medical discourse. Authors derived much of their information from classical and Renaissance texts, rehashing fact and fiction and reproducing it in practical, informative and entertaining books aimed at an increasingly literate public. Physicians and surgeons endeavoured to make Latin texts available in the vernacular to popularize medical knowledge. Anatomists such as Andreas Vesalius, Gabriello Falloppio and Jacopo Berengario da Carpi were read and translated for their pioneering studies of male and female reproductive organs.

In *Anthropometamorphosis* (1650) Bulwer examined, from head to toe, what he regarded as the artificial deformations of the body practised by different peoples. With unrestrained flourish and informative wit, each chapter focused on a particular body part as he discussed strange practices such as body piercing, tattooing and

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42 Philo Judaeus, writing in the first century, associated circumcision with fertility but believed that circumcision suppressed sexual sensations. See Gollacher, pp. 13-15. In the *Summa Theologiae* St. Thomas Aquinas suggested that God ordered circumcision for ‘the diminishing of fleshy concupiscence which thrives principally in those organs because of the intensity of venereal pleasure’. See Glick, *Marked in Your Flesh*, p. 89. Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), the medieval Jewish philosopher, suggested the need for circumcision was to bring about a decrease in sexual intercourse and a weakening of the organ in question. One of his reasons for advocating circumcision was that it was difficult for a woman with whom an uncircumcised man had had sexual intercourse to separate from him. [www.cirp.org/library/cultural/maimonides](http://www.cirp.org/library/cultural/maimonides).

circumcision. He deemed foreigners and foreign fashion monstrous and unnatural. Taking a moral tone he attacked contemporaries for their vain pursuits and emphasized the superiority of the natural over the artificial. He was concerned that ‘newfangledness’ would break down the borders of gender and identity.

Bulwer considered circumcision a strange invention and thought that it was unnatural to remove the foreskin of a healthy male:

For any Naturall end therefore, except in case of an Epidemicall disease or Gangrene to Circumcise, that is, to cut off the top of the uppermost skin of the secret parts, is directly against the honesty of Nature, and an injurious unsufferable trick put upon her.

The foreskin and its function gradually underwent scrutiny and discussion. Bulwer contended that anatomists disagreed about its ‘Naturall use’ and that even Galen (c. 129–210 CE) was unsure of its function. Galen had argued that the prepuce was only for beauty or ornament but stated also that it did have a function as an ‘operiment’ or covering. In line with Renaissance anatomists, many seventeenth-century English writers described the foreskin as the source of intense pleasure for both men and women. In 1615, Helkiah Crooke (1576–1648), physician and anatomist, published Microcosmographia, A Description of the Body of Man, a compendium of anatomical knowledge ‘collected and translated out of all the Best Authors of Anatomy’. Crooke’s was the first book of anatomy written in English by a physician rather than a surgeon. Concurring with Galen and drawing on St. Paul (Corinthians 12: 23–24) Crooke says ‘it [the foreskin] was ordained for ornament […] because upon the more dishonest part, […] the God of Nature, hath put the more honour, that is the more covering’.

Crooke’s description of the glans is interesting:

it is equall, smooth and turbinated, that is, broad at the basis or bottom, and growing smaller, yet keeping his roundness even to the top, much like a Turkes cap or Turbant, and it is called glans or the Nut of the yarde, and it is girt with a circle like a crowne

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44 See ODNB.
45 Bulwer, (1650), p. 21
46 Ibid., p. 212.
47 Laqueur points out that the Italian anatomist Gabriello Fallopio suggested that the foreskin made sexual intercourse more pleasurable, Making Sex, p. 100-101.
48 Helkiah Crooke, Microcosmographia, A Description of the Body of Man (London, 1615).
49 Ibid., p. 215; See also Bulwer p. 212.
50 Crooke, p. 215.
Crok e perceived that ‘in coition’ the foreskin ‘moved up and down, that in this action it might gather more heat and increase the pleasure of the other sexe’.

Culpeper went further and stated that the foreskin ‘moving up and down in the act of Copulation, brings pleasure both to the Man and Woman’. Drawing on the work of Crooke, Culpeper and others, the midwife Jane Sharp highlighted the role of the foreskin and agreed that it was the site of intense delight:

the Head or Nut of the Yard [...] is compact and hard & not very quick of feeling lest it should suffer pain in Copulation; There is a soft loose skin called the foreskin which covers the head of it, and will move forward and backwards as it is moved [...] The foreskin was made to defend the Yard that is tender, and to cause delight in Copulation; the Jews were commanded to cut it off.

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31 Crooke, p. 215.
33 Jane Sharp, The Midwives Book. Or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered (London, 1671), pp. 19-21. In the preface to her book Sharpe describes herself as a ‘practitioner in the art of midwifery above thirty years’. Her textbook, a small octavo volume, was the best-known textbook on midwifery in English written by a woman in the seventeenth century. Four editions were published by 1725, the third and fourth posthumously as The Compleat Midwife’s Companion. See ODNB.
Sharp voiced her wish that ‘no man will be so void of reason and Religion, as to be Circumcised’ but acknowledged that ‘the world was never without some mad men, who will do any thing to be singular’.\textsuperscript{54} She concluded pragmatically that ‘were the foreskin any hindrance to procreation or pleasure, nature had never made it’.\textsuperscript{55} In his influential study \textit{Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud} (1990), Thomas Laqueur states that Gabriello Fallopio had observed that a penis without a foreskin is not ‘naturally lubricated’.\textsuperscript{56} Lubricity was necessary for sexual pleasure and ‘when the pleasure is greater, the woman emits seed and suitable material for the formation of the foetus and for the production of membranes’.\textsuperscript{57} Laqueur sums up Fallopio’s thoughts: ‘no foreskin, less friction, no female orgasm, sterility’.\textsuperscript{58} The foreskin then was identified not only as a source of intense pleasure but also as an intrinsic aid to generation. Circumcision dramatically curtailed pleasure thus decreasing fertility. For a virile male the threat of circumcision would therefore be a source of natural anxiety.

In a society where infant mortality was high, the ability to father children was of paramount importance and crucial to male identity. Apart from the personal aspects of pleasure and fertility there were wider social concerns relating to fertility. Roy Porter stresses that ‘depopulation was the dread of mercantilist policy-makers’.\textsuperscript{59} The population needed to be maintained for economic and military reasons. An alien rite that could possibly jeopardise England’s population growth was regarded with scorn and derision.

\textbf{Eunuchism}

Circumcision was associated indiscriminately with emasculation, becoming a eunuch, sexual violation or with the curtailing of rampant sexual urges. Patricia Parker suggests that ‘the barbering that associated circumcision with the castration of the eunuch simultaneously conflated pathic sexual submission with turning Turk’.\textsuperscript{60} John Harrison, commercial and political agent, who was ‘divers times imployed into

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Sharp, p. 32.
\item Ibid.
\item Laqueur, \textit{Making Sex}, p. 100.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\item Parker, ‘Barbers and Barbary’, p. 204.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotes}
Barbarie’ to redeem Christians in the early seventeenth century, declared that Abd-al Malik, sultan of Morocco from 1627-1631, did ‘cause some English boyes perforce to turne Moores, cutting them, and making them capadoes,\textsuperscript{61} or eunuches’.\textsuperscript{62} He claimed to have been an eye witness to the ‘slaughter both of bodie, and soule’ of Christians who were:

beaten and tormented even to death, to make them forsake their faith, as not only men, but children also have been forced (and are daily) taken perforce (I say) circumcised, yea made Eunuches, and so disabled at once, both from being men, and Christian men, & otherwise most shamefullie abused by those filthy sodomites.\textsuperscript{63}

Harrison confused circumcision with castration and equated both with sexual violation and submission. Tampering with a man’s ‘yard’ enfeebled him, erased his masculinity and his Christianity and rendered him vulnerable to abuse, or aroused deviant tendencies. Bulwer, quoting Galen, outlined the importance of the testicles to physical health and the detrimental effects of castration:

the Testicles conduce to well-being, for they communicate a certaine aire to the whole Body, by whose mediation virility is reconciled, the body acquires strength and firmnesse, is made more lively; at length, the principall members so more perfectly execute their office; which parts being cut away, besides that, men are deprived of the Generative power, they want all these conveniencies, the venerian moodie is extinguished, Love grows cold, the Veines fall, the colour and heat grow dead and withered, they are made beardlesse, and altogether effeminate, therefore the Testicles are of that efficacy, that they corroborate and affect the other bowels with a common benefit.\textsuperscript{64}

In the mid-sixteenth century the Hungarian captive Bartolomej Georgijevic related that some captives were trained in the rudiments of warfare but those who possessed ‘grace or bewtie’ were ‘so mangled that no manliness is to be sene in all their bodyes’.\textsuperscript{65} They became the victims of ‘unnatural lust’ and lechery and once their

\textsuperscript{61} The Spanish word capado means to castrate, to geld or to unman.
\textsuperscript{62} John Harrison, The Tragicall Life and Death of Muley Abdala Melek the late King of Barbarie with a proposition, or petition to all Christian princes, annexed thereunto (Delft, 1633), p. 21. Between 1610 and 1631 Harrison made eight voyages to Morocco. He died sometime between 1641 and 1652. See ODNB.
\textsuperscript{63} Harrison, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{64} Bulwer, Anthropometomorphosis (London, 1653), p. 363.
\textsuperscript{65} Georgijevic, The ofspring of the House of Ottomanno, G7r. Georgijevic’s narrative Bartholomeus Georgieviz Epitome of the customes, Rytes, Ceremoni\textemdash;es, and Religion of the Turkes is the second of three texts included in Hugh Goughe’s compilation. Georgijevic’s description of the Ottomans, De Turcarum moribus Epitome was first published in Antwerp in 1544 with eighteen further editions and translations into French, German, Dutch and Polish. See Kenneth Setton, Western Hostility to Islam

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beauty had faded ‘ar made Eunuches, to serve matrones, and dames’. Eunuchs were used as guardians of the Imperial harem in Istanbul and were an integral part of its hierarchy. They were symbols of the prestige and seclusion of wealthy Ottoman households and were also custodians of the Holy Islamic sites. Johann Wild, a burgher of Nuremberg who fought with the imperial army against the Turks and was taken prisoner, travelled as a slave to Mecca and Medina in 1607. He described seeing emasculated men guarding the grave of the prophet. The captive Joseph Pitts noted that in Cairo the gentry kept ‘eunuchs or gelt negroes’in their homes with whom they entrusted their wives. Castration was forbidden under Islamic law but as the demand for eunuchs was so high, only cursory lip-service was paid to the enforcement of the law. Black eunuchs were typically slaves from Africa, especially Ethiopia and Nubia, while white eunuchs were from the Balkans. The operation was usually performed by non-Muslims. The Coptic village of al Zawya on the edge of the Western Desert in Egypt was the site where thousands of Africans were castrated en route before being transported to Cairo and on to the harems of the Ottoman Empire. Jean Baptiste Tavernier commented on the mercantile value of the black eunuchs: ‘The most deformed are those who cost the most, their extreme ugliness standing for beauty in their kind. A flattened nose a fearsome gaze, a large mouth with thick lips, black teeth separated by gaps between them, […] these are advantages for the merchants who sell them’. Paul Rycaut noted that black eunuchs were ‘ordained for the service of the Women in the Seraglio’ and were ‘wholly’

66 Georgijevic, G7r.
67 White Christian slaves were also symbols of prestige. Joseph Pitts relates that one of his masters, in Tunis, was so proud to own a Christian slave that he made him walk around town with him to enhance his status, Pitts, A True and Faithful Account, pp. 133-34.
69 Pitts, p. 75. In the Qur’an Sūrah 24:31 ‘male servants not having need (of women)’ are listed with husbands, brothers, children and close relatives, as those with whom a woman does not have to cover herself.
70 Otto F.A. Meinardus, The Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002), p. 227. Castration was originally forbidden in Islamic lands but over time it was performed within Muslim society.
dismembered\textsuperscript{72} (Figure 6). Black eunuchs were ‘completely sheared down to the skin of the belly’ while white eunuchs were men who had ‘merely been clipped’.\textsuperscript{73} The tenth-century Arab historian and geographer, al-Mukaddasi, described two types of castration. In one method the penis and testicles were removed simultaneously. In the other ‘an incision in the scrotum was made first, to remove the testicles, then, with a piece of wood under the penis, it was cut off at the root’.\textsuperscript{74} In sixteenth-century Istanbul, the Venetian bailo, Ottaviano Bon (1522-1623), observed that eunuchs were ‘not only gelt but have their yards also clean cut off’.\textsuperscript{75} He stressed it was ‘a work not to be wrought upon men of years’.\textsuperscript{76} Eunuchs were expensive to purchase because of the high mortality rate occasioned by the severity of the procedure.\textsuperscript{77} According to writer and traveller George Sandys (1578-1644), many of the young boys that were castrated were made as ‘smooth as the back of the hand’ and consequently had ‘to supply the uses of nature with a silver quill, which they wear in their Turbants’.\textsuperscript{78} Michel Baudier noted that eunuchs were usually mutilated only in the ‘inferior parts which serve for generation’. However he related that a jealous sultan,

\begin{quote}
seeing a Gelding leape upon a Mare, he judged thereby that the Eunuches which kept his women might busie their lascivious passions and he caused all to be cut off.\textsuperscript{79}
\end{quote}

Pitts noted that eunuchs were usually tall, had effeminate voices and never had any hair on their faces.\textsuperscript{80} 

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\textsuperscript{72}Rycaut, The Present State of the Ottoman Empire, p. 22. \\
\textsuperscript{73}Alain Grosrichard, The Sultan’s Court: European Fantasies of the East, trans. by Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1998), p. 149. In the late sixteenth century an English captive, Samson Rowlie, became a powerful eunuch, known as Hasan Aga, in the court of Algiers. He was the son of Francis Rowlie of Bristol. A letter from William Harborne, to Hasan Aga, dated 28 June 1586, appealing for help in releasing English captives, was published by Richard Hakluyt. Despite his apostasy and eunuchism, Harborne addresses Hasan Aga as a good Christian and a true subject of her majesty, who naturally still loved his country and countrymen. ‘To Assan Aga, Eunuch & Treasurer to Hassan Bassa king of Alger, which Assan Aga was the sonne of Fran Rowlie of Bristow merchant, taken in the Swalow’, in Hakluyt, Principal Navigations (1599-1600), II, p. 180. \\
\textsuperscript{74}Scholz, p. 200. \\
\textsuperscript{75}Ottaviano Bon, A Description of the Grand Signour’s Seraglio or Turkish Emperours Court (London, 1650), p. 96. \\
\textsuperscript{76}Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{77}Pitts, p. 75. \\
\textsuperscript{78}Sandys, A Relation of a Journey, p. 70. \\
\textsuperscript{79}Michel Baudier, The History of the Imperiall Estate of the Grand Seigneurs. Translated by Edward Grimeston (London, 1635), p. 60. \\
\textsuperscript{80}Pitts, p. 75.
\end{flushright}
From the information that could be gleaned from travellers’ accounts, captivity narratives and medical texts, early modern English people ascertained that castration and circumcision were invasive surgical procedures that involved the cutting or obliterating of the male reproductive organ with a variety of sharp implements, usually in front of triumphant onlookers. The procedures would have been regularly misperceived as being one and the same operation, with both having varying degrees of emasculating consequences. The technique and outcome was presented as painful and often life-threatening. These mysterious practices could only be imagined with a combination of nervous curiosity, horror and trepidation.

**Travellers’ Accounts of Jewish Circumcision Ceremonies**

The theological debates of post-Reformation England sparked an extraordinary interest in the rite of circumcision.\(^{81}\) Whether from first-hand experience or with the

\(^{81}\) Shapiro, p. 117.
help of ‘authentic’ information from a ‘reliable’ witness, travellers described the preparation, ritual and sacrifice involved in this initiation ritual. James Boon suggests that circumcision in particular was an act that separated an ‘us’ from a ‘them’.\(^{82}\) It epitomised difference, unfamiliarity and otherness. To witness and describe the ritual involved in an archaic rite steeped in mystery conferred an element of authority on the observer. Travellers were anxious to describe the strange paraphernalia, accoutrements and incantations that were involved in the ceremony. Some writers were sensitive to differences in religious observance while others did little to conceal their hostility and contempt. Authors described in detail the circumcising of babies (Jewish) and young boys (Islam) and usually omitted the physical and bloody aspect when referring to the circumcision of adult Christian males. Many travellers linked the dramatic ceremonious aspects of Jewish worship to the superstition and idolatry of Catholicism. Inaccuracies, prejudices and plagiarism occurred frequently. Nevertheless, descriptions were vivid and contained enough novel detail to fascinate readers and also instil caution and apprehension in the minds of would-be travellers. Observers hovered on the periphery describing the outward procedures but often mis-understood or mis-interpreted their meanings.\(^{83}\) They maintained their positions as spectators rather than participants, ensuring that they were not tainted or influenced by what they witnessed.\(^{84}\)

Christian interest in Jewish customs and literature intensified in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Jewish ghettos in European cities were a rich source of unfamiliar cultural practices and religious customs for the curious traveller to witness and experience. One of the most renowned Christian Hebraists\(^{85}\) was Johannes Buxtorf the Elder (1564-1629) whose works had a significant influence on how Judaism was perceived. Buxtorf, from Westphalia, Germany, was professor of Hebrew at Basel University for thirty-nine years and was responsible for establishing

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\(^{84}\) Ibid., p. 28.  

\(^{85}\) Christian Hebraism was a branch of Renaissance humanism. Its enthusiasts translated Jewish classics and made Jewish theory and ideas accessible. It became a recognised academic sub-discipline in the seventeenth century. See Stephen G. Burnett, From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564-1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth Century (Leiden: Brill, 1996).
Hebrew studies as an academic discipline in schools and universities. He composed dictionaries, grammars and manuals laying a philological foundation for future Christian Hebraists. Much of his information was negative and biased, and he viewed Jewish beliefs as superstition. He suggested Jews lived in a spiritual fantasy world and that ‘Judaism and superstition were almost synonymous’. In his *Juden Schul* (1603), which became a standard source for Christian knowledge of the Jews, he described a Jewish circumcision ceremony. Purchas relied heavily on Buxtorf’s account for his description of Jewish circumcision. Purchas noted that the circumciser was a Jewish male, called a *Mohel*, who would be easily recognised by his thumbs ‘on which he weareth the nails long and sharp and narrow pointed’.

Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), who witnessed a Jewish circumcision in Rome in the early 1580s, explained that the role of circumciser was a much coveted honour and those that had circumcised many times had the privilege when dead ‘that the parts of his mouth are never eaten by worms’. In an attempt to deal with the strange and unfamiliar and to break down the distance between traveller and reader, Montaigne noted the similarities between Christian baptism and Jewish circumcision ceremonies, and links both as initiation rites. The boy had godparents, was ‘wrapped in our style’, and the crying is like that of ‘ours when they are baptized’. In his manuscript, the traveller Fynes Moryson (1565/6-1630), gave details of a Jewish circumcision which he witnessed in Prague. He also attempted to relate the ceremony to something familiar and suggested that the rivalry for a role in the proceedings was similar to an English marriage ceremony where participants vie to

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86 Cited in Burnett, p. 78.
90 Ibid.
hold the ‘Bride’s gloves’.\textsuperscript{91} Circumcision was performed when the child was eight days old and could be performed in the Synagogue or in a private room. In Barbary in the late seventeenth century, Lancelot Addison (1632-1703), who was chaplain of the English garrison at Tangier from 1663 to 1670, noted that infants who died before being circumcised were circumcised at the place of burial but it was ‘not agreed whether circumcision is an absolute necessity to the life to come’.\textsuperscript{92} Moryson suggested that Jews circumcised their dead but, conversely, that it was not required for salvation.\textsuperscript{93} The ceremonial paraphernalia usually included twelve wax candles, cups of red wine, dishes of sand and oil and clean cloths. Also provided were spices, cloves, cinnamon and strong wine to revive, should anyone ‘happen to swowne’.\textsuperscript{94} The circumcising instrument could be made of glass, iron, stone or sharp, razor-like knives. In Venice in 1608 the eccentric traveller and author Thomas Coryate (c. 1577-1617) regretted that he had not witnessed a circumcision.\textsuperscript{95} However, on a visit to Istanbul in 1612 Coryate was afforded just such an opportunity and witnessed a circumcision in the home of ‘an English Jew called Amis’.\textsuperscript{96} Coryate noted the use of ‘a little instrument made not unlike those small Cissers that our Ladies and Gentlewomen doe much use’.\textsuperscript{97}

The diarist John Evelyn (1620-1706), who witnessed a Jewish circumcision in Rome on 15 January 1645, hinted at a more alien, sacrificial ceremony and he did little to conceal his hostility and revulsion at what was taking place. Evelyn

\textsuperscript{91} Fynes Moryson, \textit{Shakespeare's Europe: Unpublished Chapters of Fynes Moryson's Itinerary}, ed. by Charles Hughes (London: Sherratt & Hughes, 1903), pp. 494-5. Moryson intended the fourth part of his manuscript to complete the published part three. Charles Hughes printed a substantial portion of this as \textit{Shakespeare's Europe}. Moryson travelled through Europe and on to Constantinople between 1591 and 1597.

\textsuperscript{92} Lancelot Addison, \textit{The Present State of the Jews} (London, 1675), p. 66. Addison was the father of the famous essayist Joseph Addison.

\textsuperscript{93} Moryson, \textit{Shakespeare's Europe}, p. 495.

\textsuperscript{94} Purchas, \textit{Purchas his Pilgrimage}, (1613), I, p. 157.

\textsuperscript{95} Their circumcision they observe as duely as they did anytime betwixt Abraham (in whose time it was first instituted) and the incarnation of Christ. For they use to circumcision every male childe when he is eight dayes old, with a stony knife. But I had not the opportunity to see it’. Thomas Coryate, \textit{Coryats Crudities} (London, 1611), p. 233. See Holmberg, \textit{Jews in the Early Modern English Imagination}, pp. 84-85.

\textsuperscript{96} Coryate’s friend William Pearch, ‘being desirous to gratifie me in a matter for the which I had often before solicited him’, arranged the visit. Amis was a man of sixty but had lived in England until he was thirty. Because of his love of England Amis welcomed Coryate courteously. Purchas, \textit{Purchas His Pilgrimes} (1625), II, pp. 1824-825. The notes that Coryate sent home from the Levant were published, in an edited version, by Purchas in \textit{Purchas his Pilgrimes} (1625). Coryate never returned to England but died of dysentery in Surat, India in 1617. See Michael Strachan, \textit{The Life and Adventures of Thomas Coryate} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); Edward Terry, \textit{A Voyage to East India} (London, 1655).

\textsuperscript{97} Purchas, (1625), II, pp. 1824-825.
remarked on the ‘barbarous tone’ of the Hebrew hymn ‘rather like howling then singing’ and described the words of the circumciser as ‘mumbling’. Many early modern travellers found Jewish or Islamic music and singing threatening and disconcerting. Suggesting an almost hypnotic, trance-like state, Evelyn described how the rabbi waved the Child ‘to and fro’ before the altar. The congregation likewise swayed in reverie. Evelyn’s description of the circumcision itself is detailed and graphic:

the Jew tooke the yard of the child and Chaf’d it within his fingers till it became a little stiff [...] tooke up as much of the Praeputium as he could possibly gather, and so with the Razor, did rather Saw, then cutt it off [...] then the Rabby lifting the belly of the child to his face, & taking the yard all blody into his mouth he suck’d it a pretty while [...] This done he stripp’d downe the remainder of the fore-skin as far as he could, so as it appeared to be all raw, then he streu’d red powder on it to staunch the bleeding and coverd it with a paper hood [...] Then two of the women, and two men, viz, he who held the Child, and the Rabbin who Circumcis’d it dranke some of the Wine mingl’d with the Vinegar, blood and spittle.

Images of the circumciser’s blood-stained mouth and a congregation partaking of wine laced with bodily fluids would have created a lasting impression for the spectator, and linked the present rite to an archaic sacrifice in the ancient past.


99 Moryson referred to the circumcision celebration as ‘a clamour in the Hebrew tongue’, Shakespeare’s Europe, pp. 495.

100 de Beer, pp. 293-94.

101 Montaigne referred to this powder as ‘dragon’s blood’, p. 945-46. Bulwer noted the use of ‘Sanguis Draconis, powder of corall’ and ‘oyle of Roses’, Bulwer, (1653), p. 370. Dragon’s blood is a red phenolic resin which comes from Dracaena Draco and Daemonorops trees found in Asia and Africa as well as Central America. It was alluded to by ancient writers such as Pliny who suggested the name originated from a battle between a dragon-like creature and an elephant which resulted in the mixing of the blood of the two creatures. The resin was considered magical and renowned for its medicinal properties by the Greeks and Romans and Arabs. The resin came from the island of Socotra where it oozed from the plant in teardrops. In Roman times the Arabs exported the resin to Europe via Bombay or Zanzibar. It became known as Zanzibar drop. It is a coagulant but was also used for diarrhea and dysentery. It can be used as ink, dye or varnish. See Jean H. Langenheim, Plant Resins (Portland, Oregan: Timber Press, 2003), pp. 441-42.

102 de Beer, pp. 51-52.

103 Gollaher, p. 55 cites James Frazer’s significant study The Golden Bough and ‘The Origin of Circumcision’, Independent Review 4 (1904-5), 204-18. Frazer (1854-1941) suggested that elements of Jewish circumcision, such as the sucking of the bloody wound contained ancient magical elements. The Golden Bough was first published in London in 1890 in two volumes. A third edition from 1906-15 would reach twelve volumes. Jewish circumcision and metsitsah linked Jews to the spilling of Christian blood and accusations of murder. See Shapiro, p. 117; and Holmberg, Jews in the Early Modern English Imagination, p. 86. For more on the significance of the blood of circumcision in
Richard Lassels ((1603-1668), a Catholic priest who witnessed a circumcision on his travels through Italy considered it to be so painful to the child ‘that it was able to make a man heartily thank God that he is a Christian’. He suggested that if the child could speak he would ‘wish himself the greatest curse in the world, and to be a woman rather than a man’. These eyewitness accounts supposedly produced incontestable evidence of Jewish superstition and sacrificial leanings. Coryate had also noted that the practice of metsitsah was not common among the ancient Hebrews and was not divinely sanctioned but was an invention introduced later. This rendered the rite inauthentic and false. Buxtorf’s English translators gave a similar systematic description which conveyed the physical, surgical reality of the circumcision procedure and also attempted to explain and assign the correct Jewish terminology to the procedures taking place:

then the Mohel with his nails […] tares asunder the mangled skin of the child’s yard, forcing it so far backward, that the head of the yard may wholly appear, which renting asunder they call priah.

Buxtorf asserted that ‘Priah or denudation of the forepart of the Infants yard’ was mentioned in the Book of Joshua which said that the children of Israel should be circumcised ‘a second time’. Elements of the circumcision ritual were also linked to Catholic idolatry and the worship of relics. Moryson noted that, after being removed, the prepuce was doused with wine in a silver bowl before being taken out, preserved in salt, and buried in the churchyard. Coryate mentioned that the cut-off prepuce was carried to the mother ‘who keepeth it very preciously as a thing of worth’.


104 Richard Lassels, The Voyage of Italy: or, A Compleat Journey through Italy, in two parts (London, 1686), II, p.54.
105 Ibid.
106 The Jewish Synagogue, p. 49.
107 Ibid., p. 51.
108 Despite the fact that the early Christian church had abolished the rite of circumcision it nevertheless continued to celebrate the Feast of Circumcision. The quest for relics in the middle ages led to the miraculous discovery of Christ’s prepuce. In 788 Charlemagne is said to have given the relic to the Abbey of Charroux. Throughout the medieval period the holy prepuce was to be found in monasteries and churches across Europe. It was said to have performed miraculous cures and to increase fertility. See Remondino, pp. 43-48.
109 Moryson, Shakespeare’s Europe, p. 495.
110 Purchas, II, p. 1825.
While Jews were thought stubborn and blind in their ‘obstinacie in the observation of their ancient rites and traditions’[^111^] they were seldom regarded with as much fear or considered as big a threat as were their circumcised counterparts, Muslims.[^112^] It was pointed out in *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* that ‘the Jewes didde never constraine any strangers to be circumcised.’[^113^] The hair-raising experience of Coryate with disgruntled Jews in Venice would appear to contradict that contention. Coryate alleged that he narrowly avoided being circumcised by Jews, over a religious dispute, and claimed that Sir Henry Wotton, Ambassador in Venice was an eyewitness to this conflict.[^114^] The frontispiece of *Coryats Crudities* depicts Coryate being chased by a Jew brandishing a circumcision knife (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Frontispiece. Thomas Coryate, *Coryats Crudities* (London, 1611)

The front matter contains ‘An explication of the emblemes of the frontispice’ written by Laurence Whitaker which explains the emblem:

[^111^]: *The Policy*, p. 22.
[^112^]: From the 12th century a blood libel attached to Jews. Recurring accounts accused Jews of murdering and draining the blood of Christian children for ritualistic purposes.
[^113^]: *The Policy*, p. 25. Lancelot Addison noted that although there were frequent examples of Jews and Christians ‘turning Moors, yet very seldom are any met with who turn Jews’, *The Present State of the Jews*, pp 67-8.
[^114^]: Thomas Coryate, *Coryates Crambe, or his colwort twice sodden and now served in with other macaronicke dishes, as the second course to his Crudities* (London, 1611), pp. 26-27.
Coryate’s alleged experience suggests that while eye-witness testimony and documentation of the unfamiliar rite of circumcision could be of immense ethnographic importance, the experience remained shrouded in uncertainty and carried with it a hint of menace. It was always advisable for a Christian to remain at a safe distance from the circumciser’s blade, but nowhere so much as in Islamic territory as Coryate warns:

But have a care (at Mecca is some danger)
Leste you incurre the paine of circumcision,
Or Peter-like, to Christ do seeme a stranger.117

Circumcision was presented as a pervasive and threatening reality for those travelling or held in Muslim captivity.

Islamic Circumcision
As we have seen, it was principally travellers who reported on Jewish circumcision. Details of Islamic circumcision ceremonies and customs were supplied by Christian captives. The author of the *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (1597) noted that the Turks ‘doe seeke all meanes both to drawe, and to enforce all persons of all Nations to communicate with them in the observation both of their religion, and of the ceremonies of circumcision’.118 One of the earliest descriptions of Muslim circumcision is that by the Hungarian nobleman Bartolomej Georgijevic. He was taken captive following the Hungarian defeat by the Ottomans at Mohács, Hungary in 1525. In the English translation of his work he describes himself as a pilgrim who was ‘seven times sold into the most peineful and manifold kindes of husbandry’.119

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115 ‘Flute’ was sexual slang for penis. See Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language*.
118 *The Policy*, p. 22.
119 Georgijevic, A5v.
Despite being constrained under the ‘rustical whippe and sharp ordinances’\textsuperscript{120} of the Turks, he claims to have been present at a circumcision ceremony which he says is called ‘in theyr propre spech Tsuneth’ at which a boy of seven or eight was circumcised.\textsuperscript{121} Georgijevic suggested the reason Muslims did not circumcise infants was so that the child would be skilful in speaking the language which was necessary for reciting the words of confession required before circumcision.\textsuperscript{122} Commentators, who were familiar with a biblical tradition of circumcising infants, found the Islamic practice of circumcising young boys between the ages of seven and thirteen, as strange.\textsuperscript{123} The Policy of the Turkish Empire explained that in the ‘substance and matter of this ceremonie, they [the Turks] doe agree with the Jewes: yet in the forme, thereof, they do differ and disagree in many things’.\textsuperscript{124} He detailed the differences in age, location and levels of devotion that characterised the variations between the two religions. Georgijevic pointed out that the ceremony did not take place in a church but in the child’s home where a special banquet was prepared which involved the cooking of a traditional dish. An ox was killed ‘in which [...] they encloase a sheepe, in the sheepe a henne, and in the henne an egge, all whiche holye together are rosted in honour of that daye’.\textsuperscript{125} Georgijevic then presented a brief account of the actual circumcision:

the Phisition or Surgion [...] openeth the mitte of his yarde, and taketh the skinne folded in a crampe wire, sone after whereby to rydde the childe from feare, he sayeth that the circumcision shal be deferred until the nexte daye [...] upon a sodaine he cutteth of peace of that skinne, whiche covereth the heade of the childe yarde, putting upon the wound a little salte and softe silke thense fourth he shalbe called Musulman, which is circumcised.\textsuperscript{126}

With the initiating cut of circumcision the boy immediately becomes a Muslim.

The question of female circumcision arose in some accounts. Georgijevic noted that women were not circumcised but once they uttered the requisite words they instantly were considered Muslim. Leo Africanus (c. 1492- c.1550) revealed (in

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\textsuperscript{120} Georgijevic, A5v.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., C8r. Turkish circumcision was known as ‘sunneth’ while the barber who performed the circumcision was known as ‘sunnetdji’. See Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition,\url{http://brillonline.nl}.

\textsuperscript{122} Georgijevic, D1r.

\textsuperscript{123} Shapiro, p. 261, note 14.

\textsuperscript{124} The Policy, p. 24.

\textsuperscript{125} Georgijevic, D1r.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., D1r. Georgijevic’s description was later copied, embellished and translated by Sebastian Münster, Edward Aston and John Bulwer. The anonymous author of The Policy of the Turkish Empire explains that a Musulman is ‘one circumcised, or a profest Mahometist’, p. 23.
John Pory’s translation) that the Ethiopians ‘allow and receive both Jewish &
Christian ceremonies. Upon the eight day after their birth, they circumcise all
children both male and female’.127 Purchas repeated the unfamiliar and novel
information that in parts of Africa women were circumcised: ‘And let no man
marvel which heareth this, for they circumcise women as well as men, which thing
was not used in the old Law’.128 Purchas also noted that in Egypt and Syria there
were certain women ‘whose office is to excise or circumcise the women’.129 Jean de
Thévenot (1633-1667) observed a distinction between the ‘superstitions’ of the
Moors and those of the Turks:

The Moors are Mahometans, but they have some Superstitions, which the
Turks have not, for the Moors Circumcise their Daughters, cutting off a little
that which is called the Nymphe,130 and that Circumcision is performed by
Women. The Turks do not do so, they only Circumcise their Boys.131

The surgical differences between Islamic and Jewish male circumcision were also
commented on. Bulwer argued that Islamic circumcision was ‘more favourable’ and
not as ‘deeply performed as the Judaicall’:

The Jews that dwell in Turkey are for a note of distinction, not only
somewhat more largely circumcised, but at their Circumcision the Prepuce in
Dorso Penis is a little slit up with the Priest’s naile, and by thus marke they
use to distinguish a dead Jew from a Mahometan, and to afford them
differing Burials.132

He emphasised the absolute permanency of circumcision. Not only did it create a
distinction between circumcised and uncircumcised, but the type of cut itself was a

128 Purchas His Pilgrimes (1625), vol. II, p. 1040.
129 Purchas His Pilgrimage (1613), pp. 487-88.
130 Nympe was a common anatomical term originally from Galen. In Microcosmographia, A
Description of the Body of Man (London, 1615) the physician Helkiah Crooke describes the
Nymphae: ‘Being joined doe make a fleshy eminence, and covering the Clitoris with a fore-skin
ascend with a manifest rising Line to the top of the great cleft […] their substance is partly fleshy,
partly membranous soft and fungous, & they are invested with a thin coate. Sometimes, they grow to
so great a length on one side, more rarely on both; and not so ordinarily in maidens as in women […]
that for the trouble and shame (being in many Countries a notable argument of petulance &
immodesty) they neede the Chirugions helpe to cut them off […] especially among the Egyptians,
amongst whom this accident (as Galen saith) is very familiar. Wherefore in Maidens before they grow
too long they cut them off, and before they marry’. pp. 237-39.
131 Jean de Thévenot, The Travels of Monsieur de Thévenot into the Levant in three parts, viz. into 1.
Turkey, II. Persia, III. The East Indies newly done out of French (1687). Translated by Archibald
Lovell from the French Relation d’un voyage fait au Levant (1665).
132 Bulwer, (1653), p. 371. Peri‘ah is a radical ablation of the foreskin that bared the glans entirely.
See Gollaher, p. 17. Pierre Dan expressed the contrary opinion that Muslim circumcisions were
bloodier than those of the Jews. The latter merely cut a small portion of the foreskin, whereas the
former cut it away entirely, causing intense pain. Muslims use a knife made of stone and the latter a
mark that even in death would identify a corpse as belonging to Islam or Judaism. Grelot included an interesting detail about Muslim children who died uncircumcised: ‘As for them that dy before Circumcision, they believe them to be sav’d by that of their Parents. Only they break one of their little fingers, before they bury them, to mark them for uncircumsid’.133

Whereas the Jewish ceremony was considered a sacred sacrament carried out with solemn piety, Islamic circumcision was presented as an occasion ‘to satisfie their owne delights and pleasures’ by feasting and banqueting ‘for an outward shew and bravery in a glorious ostentation of their sect’.134 While in prison in Istanbul in the late sixteenth century, captive Edward Webbe (b. 1553/4) noted ‘the triumph and free libertie’ that was proclaimed for a hundred days on the occasion of the circumcision of the great Turke’s son.135 John Covel (1638-1722), chaplain to the British ambassador in Istanbul during the 1670s, observed the circumcision festivities of Prince Mustapha, which lasted for thirteen days.136 Covel noted that the surgeon who circumcised the prince was an Italian renegade who received a large sum of money, presented to him by the Queen mother in a large silver basin. During the celebrations Covel allegedly witnessed mass circumcision during which about two thousand men were cut publicly in honour of the Prince. Many men of riper years, one as old as fifty-three, were cut and ‘turn’d Turks’.137 He saw a twenty-year-old Russian who went skipping and rejoicing to be circumcised, ‘yet in cutting he frowned’.138 Covel estimated that there were at least two hundred proselytes made in these thirteen days, and he lamented the fact that Islam was gaining so many converts.

133 Grelot, A Late Voyage, p. 178.
134 The Policy, p. 24. Bon compared the circumcision of the ‘Turks children’ to Christian weddings, with feasting banqueting, music and the bringing of presents, A Description, p. 105.
135 Webbe, The Rare and Most Wonderfull Things, C3r.
137 Bent, p. 209. Thomas Coke also witnessed the mass circumcision: ‘About two thousand others were cut at this solemnity, who had money and a quilt from the grant signior’, Coke, p. 4.
Conversion ceremonies

Although conversion to Islam was loathed and denounced it was also a source of curiosity, excitement and entertainment for English readers. Pandering to the early modern appetite for spectacle and performance, authors of travel accounts and captivity narratives provided detailed descriptions of the ceremonies and processions that were an integral part of the conversion of a Christian to Islam. Many accounts give elaborate details of the rite of conversion and the pomp and ceremony involved while maintaining an abhorrence of apostasy. William Davies, who describes himself as a ‘barber-surgeon’, visited North Africa on board a trading vessel in the late sixteenth century.\(^{139}\) He described ‘the manner of a Christian turning Turke’. The apostate, equipped with a bow and arrow, sat backwards on a horse, facing the tail, and looked at an upside-down picture of Christ, at which he aimed his arrow.\(^ {140}\) Cursing his family he rode to the place of circumcision ‘where he is Circumcised, receiving a name, & denying his Christian name, so that ever after he is called a Runagado, that is, a Christian denying Christ and turned Turke’.\(^ {141}\) Thomas Troughton, who was held captive in Morocco in 1750, wrote that when a Christian converted the emperor called him brother and invited him to eat with him out of the same dish.\(^ {142}\) When recovered from the ‘uneasiness and inconveniences that naturally arise from the incision’ he had undergone, the emperor gave him a ‘Moorish habit’ and a ducat.\(^ {143}\)

Pierre Dan, a Trinitarian redemptionist who was in Algiers between the years 1630 and 1640, gave a detailed account of the circumcisio of renegades in North Africa. When the Christian affirms that he wishes to convert he is directed to point his index finger to the sky and to profess on that very spot that there is only one true God, who has made his home in the heavens, he must also recite the following words, La ilah, Mahomet, ressoul alla,\(^ {144}\) meaning, God

\(^{139}\) William Davies, *A True Relation of the Travailes and Most Miserable Captivities of William Davies* (London, 1614). Barbers performed medical procedures such as bloodletting or teeth extraction. Davies experienced eight years and ten months captivity under the Catholic Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinando I.

\(^{140}\) Almost a century later, Joseph Pitts, a captive who converted to Islam and back to Christianity, gave a similar, detailed account of the conversion ceremony but refutes earlier accounts of dart throwing at the image of Jesus Christ, saying ‘they who relate such things do deceive the world’. He reiterated the veracity of his account: ‘I am sure I have reason to know everything in use among them of this nature, and I assure the reader there is never any such thing done’. Pitts, p. 142.

\(^{141}\) Davies, B3v.


\(^{143}\) Ibid.

\(^{144}\) The Shahada is the Muslim confession of faith. It is the first of the five pillars of Islam and means to testify or bear witness. It appeared under various spellings and explanations in travellers and captives’ accounts.
is one and unique, and Mohammed his prophet is greatest after him. Following this, his head is shaved in the Mahometan fashion, leaving a single tiny lock of hair near the top of the head; his cap is discarded, he is given a turban, and in place of his Christian style of clothing, he is presented with clothing in compliance with Mahometan tastes. After this ceremony, the slave’s master invites everyone present to dine; and the new Muslim is afforded the most privileged seat at the table, since it is he who is the principal subject of the festivities, everyone applauds his act, the most damnable of actions commissable by a man. As the banquet concludes, the Surgeon is called forth to perform the Circumcision; and there in the presence of the entire company, he cuts the foreskin of the unfortunate renegade. His wound; and the pain with which it may afflict him may conspire to confine him to bed, and to remain there on occasion for in excess of two weeks.  

Dan detailed the total transformation of the convert that took place in front of jubilant onlookers. All traces of his Christian identity were eradicated and replaced with Muslim symbols. As the ‘entire company’ looked on, the renegade’s foreskin was cut, the pain of which necessitated bed-rest. For an adult the pain would have been agonizing, as was noted by Coryate: ‘for those of any riper years that are circumcised […] as at forty or fifty years of age, do suffer great pain for the space of a month’. In the later seventeenth century Thomas Smith (1638-1710), chaplain to the English ambassador, Sir Daniel Harvey, in Constantinople, noted that some apostate Christians out of a natural horror of pain, and ‘old men especially to whom this wound might prove deadly and fatal’, furtively eluded circumcision. He does not reveal how they managed to avoid being circumcised.

There was intense interest in the language and prayers recited at the circumcision ceremony, especially those spoken by the apostate professing allegiance to his new faith. By raising one finger to the sky Christian converts denounced the Holy Trinity and recited the Shahada ‘La ilaha illalah, Muhammad rasulu-lah’ (there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of God). The spelling and precise words of this declaration of faith varied from one text to the next, but reproducing the alien words on the page for the reader added credibility to the account and gave a fierce reality to the identity transformation taking place. The convert was verbally betraying his religion in a mysterious tongue and declaring his

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145 Dan, Book IV, pp. 349-50. Dr. Sheila Walsh, National University of Ireland, Galway, kindly assisted with this translation.
146 Coryate remarked that for a child the pain was very bitter for about twenty-four hours afterwards, *Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625), II, p. 1825.
147 Smith, *Remarks*, p. 43.
148 *The Policy of the Turkish Empire*, p. 23.
allegiance to a foreign faith. Travellers differed in their accounts over such things as which finger was held up while reciting the words of confession. Georgijevic asserted: ‘the Thumbe of his hande called Larmath’\textsuperscript{149} is lifted up, while others suggested it was the forefinger of the right hand which was raised up.\textsuperscript{150} After the convert had ‘pronounced the words of the first Commandment […] then hee is circumcised and hath also a newe name given him’.\textsuperscript{151} Pierre Dan noted that converts’ baptismal names were changed and new names attributed which were recognised under Islamic Law and which solidified the identity change, creating a new Muslim persona.

**Captive converts**

Europeans generally believed that Muslims were perpetually intent on preying on the bodies of Christians to convert and circumcise them. Georgijevic reported that when the Turks seized new captives they first endeavoured to get them to deny the Christian faith and ‘by all kinde of thretninges, faire promises and flatterings, that the late obtained bondmen, maye be circumcised’.\textsuperscript{152} Purchas suggested that in Barbary there were ‘about fiftie Boyes yearly circumcised against their wills’.\textsuperscript{153} In their published accounts of captivity, captives consistently stress a continued affiliation to their Christian identity and describe their stoic resistance to the ever present threat of conversion, or portray a deep concern for others who denied their faith. It was claimed that many turned because they were unable to withstand the extreme tortures inflicted upon them. A central trope of the captivity genre was the shocking account of a fellow captive being forced to turn Turk and the suggestion that the narrator faced the same fate but survived intact. Thomas Saunders claimed to have witnessed the forcible circumcision of two Christians, one of whom was so strong and put up such resistance that it was ‘so much as eight of the king’s sonnes men could doe to holde him, so in the ende they circumcised him, and made him Turke’.\textsuperscript{154} Nabil Matar notes that Saunders records the name of the first English convert to Islam that survives in an English source: ‘the king had there before in his house a sonne of a yeoman of our Queenes guard, Whom the kings sone had inforced

\textsuperscript{149} Georgijevic, D1r.
\textsuperscript{150} It is the fore finger of the right hand that is raised forward.
\textsuperscript{151} The Policy of the Turkish Empire, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{152} Georgijivc, G7v. The OED defines bondman as a man in bondage, a villein, a serf or a slave.
\textsuperscript{153} Purchas, Purchas His Pilgrimes (1625), vol. II, p. 1565.
\textsuperscript{154} Thomas Saunders, A True Discription, Ciir.
Cleane cutte of[f]

to turne Turke, his name was *John Nelson*.155 John Rawlins, a sailor enslaved in Algiers in 1621, stated that many captives turned out of fear of ‘torment and death [and] make their tongues betray their hearts to a most fearful wickednesse, and so are circumcised with new names, and brought to confesse a new religion’.156

It is interesting that two Englishmen who converted to Islam returned to England and Christianity and wrote about their experiences failed to admit to being circumcised. They acknowledged wearing the Moorish habit, shaving their hair, and reciting the Muslim creed but were not willing to reveal the loss of their foreskins. One of these is Joseph Pitts who, during his captivity, became the first Englishman to visit and write about the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina.157 Pitts, who was born in Exeter in 1663, became a sailor and embarked on Easter Tuesday 1678 with five others on the fishing boat *Speedwell* of Lympstone, owned by Mr. Alderman George Tothill, bound for Newfoundland. They were captured off the Spanish coast by Algerian pirates and sold into slavery at Algiers. During his fifteen-year captivity Pitts was owned by four different masters. In the early part of his captivity in Algiers, Pitts says he was forced to turn Turk because he could ‘no longer endure’ the ‘cruelities exercised’ upon him.158 The soles of his bare feet were repeatedly struck with a cudgel by his master who threatened to beat him to death if he did not turn.159 According to his account, the more he cried with pain the more furiously he was beaten, and to silence his screams his master would ‘stamp with his feet on [his] mouth’ until Pitts begged him to end his life.160 Terrorised and almost

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155 Saunders, Clrr. See See Matar, *Islam in Britain*, p. 34.
157 Pitts was probably the fourth European to write about the pilgrimage. An Italian, Ludovico di Varthema, who made the journey disguised as a Mameluke (warrior slave) in 1503, was the first European to write an account of the pilgrimage, *Itinerario de Ludovico de Varthema Bolognese* (1510). The second pilgrim, a Frenchman, Vincent Le Blanc, maintained that he visited Mecca with a friend in 1568 but the veracity of his claim has been questioned. Johann Wild, a burgher of Nuremberg, taken prisoner in Hungary, travelled as a slave to Mecca and Medina in 1607 and left a vague account. See Cecily Radford, ‘Joseph Pitts of Exeter (?1663–?1739)’, *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 52 (1920), 223-38 (pp.223-24). C. F. Beckingham suggests that Pitts was at Mecca from August to November 1685. See ‘The Date of Pitts’s Pilgrimage to Mecca’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 3/4 (1950), 112-13 (p. 113). See also *ODNB; Auchterlonie, Encountering Islam; Freeth and Winstone, Explorers of Arabia; Piracy, Slavery and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives From Early Modern England*, ed. by Daniel J. Vitkus (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 218-340; ‘Captivity and adventures of Joseph Pitts, an English slave in Algiers’, *Dublin University Magazine*, 27 (1846), 76-89, 213-27.
158 Pitts, p. 129.
159 Ibid., p. 139. This torture was known as ‘bastinado’.
160 Pitts, p. 139.
insensible as a result of this cruelty, Pitts ‘spake the words as usual, holding up the forefinger of [his] right hand’ and turned ‘Mohammetan’.  

Despite being coerced to ‘turn Turk’ Pitts implies that his forced conversion was more or less an exception. Revealing sharp anomalies in his text he insists that the Algerians ‘do not use to force any Christian to renounce his religion’.  

Regardless of the fact that Pitts was most probably circumcised he is reluctant to give any details of the procedure, the implements used or the pain endured.  

Pitts goes to great lengths to distinguish the different types of celebration afforded to those who converted by choice or who, like himself, did so under duress. He states that when any person ‘turns Mohammetan by compulsion’ the only ceremony that is required is holding up the forefinger and reciting the declaration of faith. Possibly in an effort to hide his own circumcision, Pitts suggests defensively that only those who voluntarily renounce their faith are circumcised. Of course we have no way of knowing whether or not he underwent circumcision but his attempts at proving otherwise reveal inconsistencies in his text and highlight the struggles over identity which underlie his narrative. Pitts goes on to explain that voluntary apostates were welcomed into the Muslim faith without any questions being asked and led triumphantly around the city on horseback, heralded by musicians. The convert was followed by appreciative crowds who held up their hands in thanksgiving and by armed stewards, who intimated that the apostate would

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161 Ibid., p. 140.  
162 Ibid., p. 130. Edward Aston, in his translation of Joannes Boemus (c. 1485-1535), noted that the Saracens ‘force no man to forsake their faith, and Religion, neither will they perswade any to theirs’, The Manners, Lawes and Customes of All Nations (London, 1610), p. 146. Sebastian Münster suggested that: ‘the Turkes compel no man to the denial of his religion’, A briefe collection, p. 41.  
163 In the sixteenth century Georgijeivic had described the treatment afforded to those who converted under duress: ‘If anye manne forced by violence, as one whiche hath stroken a Musulman misused him with reproche, or blasphemed Mehemet (wiche I sawe chaunce unto a certaine Bishoppe of the Grecian religion) be circumcised, there is no thing geven unto him’, D2v. In 1597 the author of The Policy of the Turkish Empire wrote that ‘if anie happen to bee circumcised by compulsion for anie offence committed: as for striking of a Musulman, or for blaspheming of MAHOMET, or any such like trespasse […] To such a one, they doe not give any gifts or presents’, pp. 24r-v. See Nabil Matar, ‘The Renegade in English Seventeenth-Century Imagination’, Studies in English Literature 1500-1900, 33 (1993), 489-505, (p. 494).  
164 Pitts, p. 140.  
165 The Policy of the Turkish Empire noted: ‘And their order is, that not onely all the male children of naturall borne Turks should in their infancie be circumcised: but that all others also both men and children shal be the like: who shal either voluntarily or by constraint be brought to the embracing of their religion’, p. 23.
be ‘cut in pieces’ should he recant.\textsuperscript{166} Pitts asserted that the circumcision was not carried out at this stage but a few days later:

the \textit{seunet gee} of the town, i.e., the circumciser, comes and performs the ceremony of circumcision. And then he is a Turk to all intents and purposes.\textsuperscript{167}

The conversion is not complete until the convert is circumcised after which he becomes ‘a Turk’. Again it was the cut of circumcision that signified the moment of becoming and the initiation into the Muslim faith.

Pitts’s conversion confers him with authority to supply ethnographic detail but also invites the suspicion of his readers and renders his identity questionable. Sceptical readers would have been curious and may have expected testimony as to whether or not he was circumcised. In \textit{Captain Singleton} (1720), Daniel Defoe includes an incident in which Singleton is suspected of being a Turk instead of an English boy and is stripped to prove his identity:

for I had no body to vouch for me what I was or whence I came; but the good Padre Antonio […] cleared me of that Part by a Way I did not understand: For he came to me one Morning with two Sailors and told me they must search me, to bear Witness that I was not a Turk […] Stripping me they were soon satisfy’d […] for they could all Witness that I was no Turk.\textsuperscript{168}

There is no evidence that Pitts was ever required to physically prove his identity by revealing the retention of his foreskin, but his narrative highlights his internal struggles with his identity. Pitts recounted feelings of sadness and regret at leaving his master. He stated that even after being given his freedom he chose to live with his master who provided him with ‘meat, coffee, washing, lodging, and clothes freely’ and loved him as if he had been his own child.\textsuperscript{169} Pitts believed that his master would also leave him ‘considerable substance at his death’.\textsuperscript{170} Even after he had taken the decision to escape, Pitts was troubled by his conscience: ‘Now the

\textsuperscript{166} Purchas outlined the consequences of returning to Christianity: ‘If a circumcised man would returne to Christ, and is thereof convicted, hee is carried about […] naked, and proclamation made before him, chayned after to a poste and burned, often beaten or dismembred first, \textit{Purchas His Pilgrimes} (1625), p.1566.
\textsuperscript{167} Pitts, p. 142. \textit{Seunet gee} means circumciser. In modern Turkish it is sünnetçi.
\textsuperscript{168} Daniel Defoe, \textit{The Life, Adventures and Pyracies of the famous Captain Singleton} (London, 1720), p. 11.
\textsuperscript{169} Pitts, pp. 171-72.
\textsuperscript{170} Pitts, pp. 172.
Devil was very busy with me […] tempting me to lay aside all thoughts of Escaping and to return to Algier and continue as a Mussulman’. 171

Like Pitts, Thomas Pellow (b. 1704) claimed to have being tortured into denouncing his Christian faith. Pellow, of Penryn, Cornwall, was only eleven when, on a voyage with his uncle, he was captured by Moroccan corsairs, and spent twenty-three years in captivity, from 1715 to 1738. In ‘A List of the English Ships taken by the Sallee Rovers, and of the Men carry’d Captives to Mequinez, from Oct. 5, 1714 to July 14, 1721’ Pellow is included as ‘Boy, turn’d Moor’. 172 Pellow includes an account of his unsuccessful resistance to torture and his ultimate capitulation to conversion. He was initially offered enticements such as a fine horse if he would ‘turn Moor’ but he was resolved not to renounce his faith. He was subsequently chained in irons and imprisoned in his master’s house for several months, eating nothing but bread and water, and would, at that stage, have been happy to have ‘dy’d a martyr’. He describes the increasingly frenzied attacks of his master as he furiously yields a bull’s pizzle 173 ‘most severely bastinading’ him and burning my flesh off my bones by fire, which the tyrant did by frequent repetitions after a most cruel manner […] I was at last constrained to submit, calling upon God to forgive me who knows that I never gave the Consent of the Heart, though I seemingly yielded by holding up my finger; and that I always abominated them, and their accursed principle of Mahometism. 174

Using a standard opposition of bodily subjugation and internal freedom Pellow is careful to emphasize that he converted under extreme torture and that his actions did not reflect the intentions of his heart. 175 His identity transformation was gradual, as he declined to put on the ‘Moorish habit’ for a further forty days:

I was kept forty days longer in prison on my refusing to put on the Moorish habit but I at length reflected, That to refuse this any longer, was a very foolish Obstinci, since it was a Thing indifferent in its own Nature, seeing I had already been compelled to give my Assent to Mahometism; therefore, rather than undergo fresh Torments, I also complied with it, appearing like a Mahometan. 176

171 Pitts, p. 171.
172 A Description of the Nature of Slavery among the Moors and the Cruel Sufferings of those that fall into it (London, 1721), pp. 13-21 (p.16). Two hundred and ninety six Britons were released from slavery under a treaty negotiated by Commodore Charles Stewart in 1720. As a Muslim, Pellow was excluded from the treaty.
173 A torture instrument made from a bull’s penis. Pizzle is an Old English word for penis.
175 Snader, Caught Between Worlds, p. 107.
176 Pellow, p. 16.
Forty days’ endurance of torture and inducement linked Pellow’s ordeal to the New Testament account of Christ’s suffering in the desert and his temptation by Satan. Although Pellow was most probably circumcised he does not mention this in his narrative. In retrospect Pellow recognised that once he had admitted to wearing Moorish clothing and appearing ‘like a Mahometan’ his identity became problematic and questionable thereafter. It is clear that Pellow struggled with his religious and cultural identity after his reintegration to English society. By that time he had spent longer in Morocco than he had in England. As Nabil Matar suggests, ‘Islam overpowered Englishmen by the force of cultural habit’. Joseph Pitts highlights instances of acculturation and identity confusion, where Englishmen who had endured many years of slavery, and despite being ransomed and returning home, chose to return to Algiers and Islam. Re-encountering English culture and reassuming his English, Christian identity would have been as alien to Pellow as his initial experiences in North Africa. Returning from Islamic captivity ‘had changed what it meant to be English’. Throughout the narrative he states his abhorrence and detestation of Islam but simultaneously recounts his adaptation to Moroccan culture and his obvious pride in his military achievements. He candidly acknowledges the ambiguity of his situation and remarks that ‘ill natured People think me so even to this Day’.

**Denunciation from the pulpit**

It was the hidden imperceptible aspect of apostasy that sparked the ire and concern of preachers and society’s moral guardians. With its negative connotations circumcision received violent condemnation from the pulpit. Rev. Charles Fitzgeffry contended that there were

> No greater enemies to Christians than these Renegadoes. […] Christians turned Turks? […] And in their Circumcision have cut themselves off, not only from Christianity but from humanity. […] If Angels doe apostate they become Devils.

William Gouge (1575-1653), Church of England clergyman, implied that ‘Jewes, Turkes and other adversaries of the Christian faith’ did all in their power ‘to draw

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177 Matar, *Islam in Britain*, p. 28.
178 Pitts, p. 314.
180 Pellow, p. 16.
181 Fitzgeffry, *Compassion Towards Captives*, p. 10.
such Christians as they can get into their clutches, to be circumcised’.
Edward Kellet (c. 1580-1641) began his apostasy sermon by quoting from St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians 5:2: If yee be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. Kellet railed against circumcision: ‘how heinous is that sinne of being circumcised, which is attended with so dread-full a punishment, as the receaving of no benefit by the death of Christ.’ Referring graphically to the cut of circumcision, he accused the renegade of ‘stayning and ingrayning of the Christal clere-saving water of Baptisme, with the bloud of Circumcision’.

To a congregation that barely understood the rite of circumcision his words would have conjured up images of bloody mutilation and horror. Recalling Adam’s sin and nakedness Kellet drew attention to the phallic representation of the apostate’s conversion:

To plucke the figge-leaves, to take away the excuses, to remove the loose veiles and covers, that so you may see and bewaile the monstrousness of your offence; and that others may avoide the like.

Employing suggestive innuendos Kellet referred to the apostate’s member from which the cover had been removed, and which represented his capitulation and conversion. The apostate’s body bore the irreversible mark of his religious and cultural infidelity.

Preachers berated Islam as a lustful, promiscuous religion whose members were capable of slithering slyly amongst good Christians to defile and convert them:

I feare there are some that have played Renegadoes, and as an evidence thereof, are circumcised. Let such know (whether they heare me themselves or shall heare of what I say by others) let them know, that by their secret thrusting themselves into the Church, and concealing their sinne from the Governours thereof, and that without just satisfaction which ought to be publikely given for an offence so scandalous as theirs is, they can never find such peace in their conscience.

Gouge’s reference to circumcised renegades stealthily thrusting themselves into the Church conjures up a phallically suggestive image that would not have been lost on the congregation. In an effort to identify possible apostates in his congregation Gouge continued in a similar manner:

182 Gouge, p. 13.
183 Kellet A Returne from Argier, p. 5.
184 Ibid., p. 18.
185 Ibid., pp. 17-18.
186 Gouge, p. 16.
whosoever you be that have renounced your Religion and denied your Lord and Saviour, and yet without any publicke confession or satisfaction intrude into the Church, and thrust your selves in among the guests which are invited to the Lords table, ye draw a skin over a festring wound: Ye eat and drinke your owne damnation: Yee make the Lord to expostulate the case with you, and to say unto you, How came ye hither not having a wedding garment? […] And assuredly he will be ashamed of such, as having denied him are ashamed to make open confession of that their deniall.\^

Again Gouge uses the verb ‘thrust’ and alludes to circumcision as a ‘festring wound’ suggesting something rotten and offensive capable of corrupting and polluting the entire congregation. He hints metaphorically at the absence of the foreskin as apostates attempt to blend back into Christian society by concealing their transgression. Gouge refers to the parable of the wedding garment from the Gospel of Matthew 22:11-14 and compares those who have not owned up to their sin of apostasy to the slave who attends a wedding ceremony without a wedding garment. Without appropriate repentance, conversion and purity of heart renegades could not be readmitted into the Church. The wedding garment symbolizes sincerity, integrity and atonement, and stands in stark contrast to Turkish clothing which to the English congregation represented transgression and sinfulness. Gouge linked the wedding garment to the covering of skin which the renegade has been deprived of.

For Englishmen retaining the foreskin was of paramount importance as the lack thereof signified the total, irreversible loss of English, Christian, cultural and sexual identity. Equating circumcision with castration and eunuchs served to emasculate Christian men who had turned Turk. Submission to circumcision by Englishmen was considered a rejection of their culture and religion, and was the ultimate betrayal of their English identity. They became in a very real sense ‘other’. In the blunt words of Bartholomew Georgijevic, once a Christian male was circumcised all hope of recovering his former identity was ‘cleane cutte of[\f]’.\^

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187 Gouge, p. 21.
188 Georgijevic, G7v.
Chapter 3

‘That Masculine Misery’: Representations of sodomy and the imagined threat to Christians by Muslim sodomites

Barbary captivity narratives and travel accounts highlight the sexual peril to male captives and reveal anxieties about the penetration and emasculation of passive Christian men by aggressive Muslim predators. As well as being threatened with circumcision and castration, captives were considered to be at risk of being sodomized. The early modern terms sodomy or sodomite do not equate solely with what we now mean by anal intercourse. Michel Foucault suggests that in the early modern period in Christian Europe ‘sodomy was a category of forbidden acts’ rather than a specific activity which defined identity. Linda Colley claims that accusing the Ottoman Empire and the Barbary states of sodomizing Christian men was a ‘particularly acute expression of the fear and insecurity that Britons felt in the face of Islamic power’ and voiced an ancient concern that Islam would gain converts and triumph over Christianity. While circumcision was an indelible marker of conversion borne by the convert as permanent evidence of his supposed or actual apostasy, the victim of sodomy did not bear a visible or tangible bodily mark. The act itself, which was difficult to define, represented the destruction of the captive’s manhood and aroused suspicion that he had willingly transgressed, and his sexuality was questionable thereafter. A male captive who was the victim of sodomy became feminized. Conversion to Islam by Christian males led European commentators to suggest that it involved an alteration or deviation in sexual behaviour.

This chapter will firstly attempt to outline the diverse meanings and contexts attached to the concept of sodomy in early modern society. Attitudes to sodomy in Christendom and in particular in England will be examined. Many of the evils

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1 The OED defines sodomy as ‘originally: any form of sexual intercourse considered to be unnatural. Now chiefly: anal intercourse’.
3 Foucault, The History of Sexuality, p. 43.
5 Merry E. Wiesner asserts that punishments in early modern Europe were more severe for males who took the passive role in homosexual relations, Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 68.
attributed to Muslims were prevalent in England, so for those concerned with the crumbling of English society, reporting on Muslim mores also ‘constituted an exercise in self-inspection by means of comparison’.

While accusations of sexual mis-conduct were widespread and sodomy did exist as a domestic problem, this was transposed onto Muslims and presented as a foreign contagion. Encountering Islamic society, Englishmen generated a discourse of otherness which highlighted sexual deviance and created an exaggerated, negative image of Muslims. The sodomizing Muslim became a stock image for travellers who eagerly recounted the ‘sodomitical’ acts they claimed to have witnessed. Captives enhanced their narrative popularity by adding details of the sordid tortures inflicted on fellow captives.

Gaining access to the vulnerable bodies of Christians, the Muslim sodomite posed a potential threat to the permeable boundaries of English cultural and religious identity. The sodomite was portrayed as lurking outside the normal English social world, a reminder and a ‘representative of an obviously foreign corruption’.

If sodomy was a foreign affliction, men travelling or held captive in unfamiliar lands were at risk of contagion. Immoral acts if embraced and performed by Englishmen abroad would ultimately lead to social decay at home.

**Defining Sodomy and Recognising the Sodomite**

Paul Hammond claims that rather than being a coherent notion, sodomy ‘is a cluster of associations: it is at once too precise (a specific physical act) and too vague (a general category of moral and political deviance)’. Cameron McFarlane points to the ‘unrepresentable’ aspect of sodomy and its construction as ‘peccatum illud horribile, inter christianos non nominandum – the horrible crime not to be named among Christians’. He asserts that sodomy ‘is without location’ and is ‘unlocatable precisely because sodomy was thought to be outside the order signified by the

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7 Only one captive, Adam Elliot, admitted to being the victim of a sodomitical attack. Adam Elliot, ‘A Narrative of My Travails, Captivity and Escape from Salle, In the Kingdom of Fez’, in *A Modest Vindication of Titus Oates, the Salamanca-doctor from perjury, or, An essay to demonstrate him only forsworn in several instances* (London, 1682).
11 McFarlane, p. 25. See also p. 184 n.1.
general correspondence of thoughts, things, words and locations’. It is this unpecific, indefinable and unutterable quality that makes the concept of early modern sodomy so complex and renders it difficult to grasp the actual practices which were considered sodomitical. As Alan Bray suggests, sodomites, along with sorcerers and heretics, were ‘not the stuff of daily life but of myth or legend, not of experience but of fear’. 

Sodomy and buggery were crimes which threatened to destroy self-control, manliness and order and, according to Bray, they represented ‘the disorder in sexual relations’ that could break out anywhere and were ill-defined acts which anyone could commit. Prior to the nineteenth century it was believed that sodomy was a temptation to which anybody could fall prey or be capable of, and it was zealously denounced and legislated against. Jonathan Goldberg asserts that as a sexual act sodomy was ‘anything that threatens alliance’ and may involve ‘acts that men might

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13 Bray, p. 19.
14 Two definitions are given for buggery in the OED: 1. Abominable heresy; 2. Anal Intercourse. The term ‘buggery’ originally had no sexual connotation. It was used to describe the religious and sexual non-conformity of Manichaean heretics in the later-Middle Ages. It is believed to be a corruption of Bulgars who were thought to have originated in Bulgaria. See Jonathan Dollimore, Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 236. John Boswell states that the French word ‘bougre’ referred to heretics of Bulgarian origin but later came to refer to a person who practised sodomy. See John Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 285 n. 47. Vern Bullough states that one of the earliest English uses of the term with a sexual connotation is in Robert Manning’s (1288-1338) Langtoft’s Chronicle, where one of the characters says that the pope was a heretic who ‘lyved in bugerie’. See Sexual Practices & the Medieval Church, ed. by Vern L. Bullough and James Brundage (New York: Prometheus Books, 1982), p. 207.
15 Bray, p. 25. Details of prosecutions and executions for sodomy and buggery in the early modern period survive in pamphlets, ballads and literary texts. There were a few high-profile cases which gained notoriety during the seventeenth century in England. Mervyn Touchet, Lord Castlehaven (1593-1631) and his two menservants, Lawrence Fitzpatrick and Giles Broadway, were executed for sodomy in 1631. John Atherton (1598-1640), Lord Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, and his proctor John Childe were given the death penalty in 1641. A rhyming pamphlet, The Life and Death of John Atherton (London, 1641) describes the crimes allegedly committed by Atherton. In 1698, Captain Edward Rigby was the victim of a covert honey-trap which is recorded in An Account of the Proceedings against Capt. Edward Rigby (London, 1698). Roger Thompson lists some of those charged with ‘unnatural vice’ in the seventeenth century: Charles II, the Bishop of London, John Dryden the playwright and poet, actor James Noakes, Nathaniel Lee the playwright, the Dukes of Vendome and York, Lords Falkland, Mordaunt, Talbot and Berkeley. Alleged victims include: ‘Ladies Felton, Arundel, Stamford, Portsmouth and Shrewsbury, the Misses Gwyn, Temple and Jenny Dee, William Mountfort the actor, the Earl of Arran, a judge of the high court, a turkey and a rotten door’, Unfit for Modest Ears: A Study of Pornographic, Obscene and Bawdy Works Written or Published in England in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century (London: Macmillan Press, 1979), pp. 124-25.
perform with men, women with women [...] men and women with each other, and anyone with a goat, a pig, or a horse'.

Dollimore suggests that sodomy encompassed a wide range of practices including prostitution, under age sex, coitus interruptus, and female transvestism. The pervasive feeling of confusion which surrounds the interpretation of sodomy and buggery in the early modern period is summed up by McFarlane as ‘a combination of knowingness and uncertainty’. That the two terms were used interchangeably is illustrated by Lord Chief Justice Edward Coke (1552-1634) in The Third Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England (1644) under a heading ‘Of Buggery, or Sodomy’:

Buggery is a detestable and abominable sin, amongst Christians not to be named, committed by carnall knowledge against the ordnance of the Creator, and order of nature by mankind with mankind or with brute beast, or by womankind with brute beast.

Clarifying this statement Coke goes on to relate that there must be penetration either with mankind, or with beast ‘but the least penetration maketh it carnal knowledge’. Bray argues that neither sodomy nor buggery ‘was synonymous with anal penetration alone’ and that the concept implied by both words was debauchery. Henry VIII’s Buggery Act of 1533 decreed that all acts of buggery, whether with

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18 Dollimore, p. 238.
19 McFarlane, p. 2.
21 Coke, *The Third Part*, p. 59. Legal depositions and convictions relied on specific details of the sexual act and rested upon whether or not penetration had occurred. In a sensational and sexually explicit criminal pamphlet, an anonymous court reporter recounted the crimes before the Old Bailey on 11 July, 1677. Amongst the usual mundane crimes of petty theft, horse theft and manslaughter he described an ‘abominable Crime’ which he claimed was unparalleled in the modest and chaste English climate ‘herteo a stranger to such unnatural wickedness’. A married woman, who appeared to be between thirty and forty years of age, was accused of committing buggery with ‘a certain Mungril Dog, and wickedly, divellishly, and against nature had venereal and Carnal copulation with him’. There were three witnesses in court who testified to seeing the woman ‘practising this beastliness’. In other words, they confirmed that penetration had taken place. For this crime the woman was sentenced to Death. Also before the court, in a separate case, was a man accused of the buggery of two mares. However, as the witnesses, who were ‘threescore yards distant […] could not make that direct and positive Proof which the Law exacts’, he was acquitted. *A True Narrative of the Proceedings at the Sessions-House in the Old-Baily: Wherein is contained the Tryal of the Woman for committing that odious sin of Buggery with a Dog; And likewise of the Man for Buggering of two Mares* (London, 1677), pp. 1-2.
22 Bray, p. 16.
man or beast, were equally condemned as being ‘against nature’ and were punishable by death.\textsuperscript{23}

The sodomite, argues Jonathan Dollimore, was ‘the point of entry into civilization for the unnatural, the aberrant and the abhorrent, the wilderness of disorder which beleagured all civilization’.\textsuperscript{24} McFarlane suggests the sodomite was a conduit for ‘chaos beyond representation’ and embodied the fear that ‘order might fall into confusion, that the world could be turned upside down’ and that the order of nature might be reversed.\textsuperscript{25} Sodomy was closely linked with religious and political rebellion.\textsuperscript{26} A sodomite could be a witch, werewolf, demon or foreigner involved in a wide range of activities from religious blasphemy to black magic.\textsuperscript{27} Mario DiGangi points out that a sodomite was treasonous and heretical and he shared these distinguishing characteristics with other deviants.\textsuperscript{28} Aberrant sexuality was also equated with religious non-conformity.\textsuperscript{29} The sexually rapacious sodomite could corrupt and eventually overthrow society by attacking its religious foundation.

In early modern England sodomy was considered a heinous, unnatural sin against God and Nature.\textsuperscript{30} Christians cited the Old Testament catastrophe from the book of Genesis\textsuperscript{31} that destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as evidence of the calamities that a wrathful God would inflict on contemporary England if such a


\textsuperscript{24} Dollimore, p. 239.

\textsuperscript{25} McFarlane, p. 33.

\textsuperscript{26} In the late Middle Ages heretics were accused of practising sodomy. Bullough suggests that one of the most infamous attempts to link deviant sexuality with heretical behaviour was the trial of the crusading order the Knights Templar. On October 13, 1307, Philip IV ordered the arrest of all the Knights Templars in France. They were accused of heresy and sodomy, Bullough, p. 213.

\textsuperscript{27} G. S. Rousseau, \textit{Perilous Enlightenment: Pre- and Post-modern Discourses, Sexual Historical} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 7. In his \textit{Basilikon Doron} James I stated that there are ‘some horrible crimes that ye are bound in conscience never to forgive: such as witchcraft, wilful murder, sodomy’. James I was noted for his relationships with men. Charles I, oblivious to his father’s sexual preferences, considered sodomy and witchcraft to be in the same category. Caroline Bingham, ‘Seventeenth-Century Attitudes toward Deviant Sex’, \textit{The Journal of Interdisciplinary History}, 1 (1971), 447-68 (p. 461).


\textsuperscript{30} The idea that some sexual pursuits were sins against nature originated in the early Middle-Ages. See Bullough and Brundage, \textit{Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church}.

\textsuperscript{31} Genesis 18-19.
‘hateful Sin’ were allowed to take root and flourish. In a sermon of 1697 Josiah Woodward (1657-1712), a Church of England clergyman, warned his congregation that succumbing to ‘sensuality and sordid lusts’ would provide only short-lived pleasure:

They sink first into the vileness of Beasts, and then into the misery of Devils. Their temporary Vanity leads them most assuredly to eternal Vexation. They may perhaps have a little Sunshine in the Morning as Sodom itself had; but there is a dreadful Shower of fiery Indignation coming down from God to consume his Adversaries. For however they delude themselves now, they will find at last, that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment than for them, except they repent.32

To yield, even temporarily, to the vices that claimed the biblical cities was to incur the fury of God and condemn one’s soul to eternal damnation in the fires of hell. In Leviticus Chapters 18 and 20, multiple variations of sexual acts are condemned, including sodomy: ‘If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death’.33 St. Paul’s epistle to the Romans denounced those who sin against nature: ‘For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful’.34 The Bible provided a constant reminder of the divine retribution that would rain down not only on those who transgressed, but on the whole of society.

Sodomy and the Islamic world

Sodomy was often portrayed as an alien malady of dubious origin rather than an internal malaise.35 While satires, plays and poems did depict debauched Englishmen indulging in sodomitical practices, there was a dogged determination to situate it in a

33 Leviticus 20:13.
34 Romans 1:26-27.
35 Attributing sexual deviance to cultures other than one’s own can be traced back to Herodotus who accused the Egyptians of bestiality. See Jonathan Burton, ‘Western Encounters with Sex and Bodies in Non-European Cultures, 1500-1750’, in The Routledge History of Sex and the Body: 1500 to the Present, ed. by Sarah Touland and Kate Fisher (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 495-510 (p. 505). Burton notes that, unlike the English, the Turks acknowledged sodomy within their own borders but it was invariably located elsewhere within their vast empire, ‘Emplotting the Early Modern Mediterranean’, in Remapping the Mediterranean World in Early Modern English Writings, ed. by Goran V. Stanivukovic (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 21-40.
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foreign context.\textsuperscript{36} Italy, the Levant and North Africa were denounced as the loci of the sexual depravity of Roman Catholic, Muslim or barbaric societies.\textsuperscript{37} William Lithgow (1582–d. in or after 1645), a Lanarkshire Scotsman who travelled extensively in Europe, Asia and Africa in the early seventeenth century, suggested that the whole ‘Southerne World’ was defiled and ‘damnably given’ to what he coined ‘that Masculine misery’.\textsuperscript{38} Describing the people of Algiers the captive Mr. T. S. suggested that:

\begin{quote}
a strange Fancy possesses the minds of all the Southern People; they burn with an unnatural Fire, which consumed Sodom and Gomorrah […] It is strange to see how passionate they are for handsome males.\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

He emphasised how odd and unusual this ‘fancy’ was to him and how unaccustomed he was to witnessing such unnatural passion for attractive men. In \textit{Anthropometamorphosis} (1650) John Bulwer indicated what sodomy, ‘that sin so hateful to Nature’, entailed, but situated it abroad. He suggested that amongst the Persians and other nations of the Levant there were

\begin{quote}
infinite swarms of Catamites\textsuperscript{40} or Sodomitical Boyes, who make an unrighteous use of the Rectum Intestinum, to the foule shame and dishonour of their bodies.\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{36} Bray, p. 75. See for example the satires of Ben Jonson, John Donne or John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. A stock image of seventeenth-century satires, poems and plays was the self-indulgent man-about-town with ‘his mistress abroad and his ingle at home’. See Ben Jonson, \textit{Epicoene or the Silent Woman} (London, 1609). John Florio defines ingle as ‘a wanton boy, a bardshe, a buggering boy’, \textit{World of Words} (1598); Randal Cotgrave describes an ingle as ‘a youth kept or accompanied for Sodome’, \textit{A Dictionary of the French and English Tongues} (London, 1611); the origin of ingle is unknown but Richard Perceval cites ingle as ‘the groyne, the bottome of the belly, the flanke’ which is from the Latin \textit{inguen} meaning the groin or the private parts, \textit{Dictionary in Spanish and English} (London, 1599). See LEME.

\textsuperscript{37} Orgel, p. 39. In his reports on English statutes and the judicial system Edward Coke stated ‘Bugrone Italice, is a Baggerer, and Baggerare is to buggar, so Buggary commeth of the Italian Word’, \textit{The Twelfth Part of the Reports of Sir Edward Coke} (London, 1656), p. 36. He also stated that ‘Paderastes […] is a Greek word […] which is but a Species of Buggery’ and he blamed the ‘Lumbards’ for bringing ‘into the Realm the shamefull sin of Sodomy’, Coke, \textit{The Third Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England}, p. 58. Pederasty is homosexual relations between a man and a boy; homosexual anal intercourse, usually with a boy or younger man as the passive partner. See \textit{OED}. The Lombards were a Germanic people who conquered Italy in the 6\textsuperscript{th} century and from whom Lombardy derives its name. See \textit{OED}.

\textsuperscript{38} Lithgow, \textit{The Totall Discourse of the Rare Adventures, and painfull Peregrinations of long nineteen Yeares Travels, from Scotland, to the most Famous Kingdomes in Europe, Asia and Affrica} (London, 1632), p. 416.

\textsuperscript{39} The \textit{Adventures of (Mr. T. S.) an English Merchant taken prisoner by the Turks of Argiers} (London, 1670), pp. 28-29.

\textsuperscript{40} A catamite, a boy kept for homosexual practices; the passive partner in anal intercourse. See \textit{OED}. In his Italian/English dictionary \textit{Queen Anna’s New World of Words} (1611) John Florio defines catamito as ‘one hired to sinne against nature, an ingle, a ganimade’, p. 88. Other common terms were pathic, sinaedus and bugger. See Bray, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{41} Bulwer, \textit{Anthropometamorphosis} (1650), p. 198.
Bulwer clearly identified sodomy as a physical, sexual act.

Although sodomy and the sodomite could have multiple meanings, in texts describing Muslims these terms were invariably used in a sexual context.\textsuperscript{42} Dollimore emphasises that ‘such associations of sexual deviance and political threat have a long history’.\textsuperscript{43} At times of conflict or uncertainty ‘crisis is displaced onto the deviant’ and ‘succeeds because of the paranoid instabilities at the heart of dominant cultural identities’.\textsuperscript{44} Confronted with the might of Islamic power, England concentrated its fears and suspicions onto the grossly inflated figure of the sexually rapacious and degenerate Muslim.

Many of the tropes and stereotypes used by early modern travellers and captives had their origins in medieval texts. One of the earliest texts to connect Muslims with sodomy is \textit{Pelagius} by the tenth-century poet and playwright, Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim.\textsuperscript{45} Montgomery Watt states that ‘a distorted image of Islam’ evolved in Europe between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{46} Of course, by the middle of the twelfth century there were also more reasonable views of Islam. For example, William of Malmesbury emphasized the monotheism of Islam and that Mahomet was worshiped not as God but as his prophet.\textsuperscript{47} John Boswell illustrates that since the time of the First Crusade details of Muslim sexual habits increasingly focused on conduct which was ‘atypical or repugnant to the majority of Christians’.\textsuperscript{48} Crusade literature, littered with details of sexual violation and religious and ethnic taboos, was extremely popular.\textsuperscript{49} A letter sent in the late eleventh or early twelfth century by the Byzantine emperor Alexius Comnenus to all Occidental churches appealing for aid against the Muslims in the Holy Land is an example of a formula that continued into the early modern period:

\begin{quote}
They have degraded by sodomizing them men of every age and rank: boys, adolescents, young men, old men, nobles, servants, and, what is worse and more wicked, clerics and monks, and even – alas and for shame! Something which from the beginning of time has never been
\end{quote}
spoken of or heard of – bishops! They have already killed one bishop with this nefarious sin.\textsuperscript{50}

Sexual deviance among Muslims allegedly disregarded gender, age, profession and religion. By accusing Muslims of sodomizing clergy, including bishops, this account made it clear that Islam was attacking the very pillars of Christianity. It was the ultimate pollution of one faith by another.\textsuperscript{51}

Islam as a religion of alleged self-indulgence and decadence was reported to authorise sexual licence and promiscuity.\textsuperscript{52} The theologian Jacques de Vitry (c. 1160/70-1240) wrote that Muhammad popularized the vice of sodomy among his people, who sexually abuse not only both genders but even animals and have for the most part become like mindless horses or mules\textsuperscript{53} [...] sunk dead and buried in the filth of obscene desire, pursuing like animals the lusts of the flesh, they can resist no vices but are miserably enslaved to and ruled by carnal passions, often without even being roused by desire; they consider it meritorious to stimulate the most sordid desires.\textsuperscript{54}

The image created was of a debauched people addicted to unnatural lusts and in whom carnality was endemic. Muslims were imagined to satisfy atavistic cravings without either desire or restraint, and to engage in lust-fuelled pursuits of the flesh. This was antithetical to the teachings of Christianity which dictated that sexual intercourse was to be used only for the purposes of procreation, not to satisfy bodily desires.

Medieval stereotypes were embellished and repeated by early modern authors. \textit{The Policy of the Turkish Empire} (1597) portrayed the Turks as insatiable sodomites and insisted that ‘the contagion of this detestable sin & enormity hath so

\textsuperscript{50} Trans. in Boswell, p. 280. Boswell states that practically all modern scholars agree that this letter to Robert of Flanders by Alexius I Commenus is a forgery. See Boswell, p. 279 n 33. See also Einar Joranson, ‘The Spurious Letter of Emperor Alexius to the Court of Flanders’, \textit{The American Historical Review}, 55 (July 1950), 811-32. Joranson suggests that the compilation was done in Italy in 1105 and that by the end of 1105 or very early in 1106 copies were sent to France to arouse support for the First Crusade, p. 831. Karras suggests that the letter was written before 1098, p. 132.


\textsuperscript{52} Watt, \textit{The Influence of Islam}, p. 73. See Dimmock, \textit{Mythologies}.

\textsuperscript{53} The mule is a cross-breed resulting from copulation between a horse and a donkey. See Fudge, p. 22.

overspread all degrees of men’. Edward Aston writing in 1611 claimed that the ‘accursed and Epileptical Mahomet and his damnable doctrine’ gave to his people ‘free liberty and power to pursue their lustes and all other pleasures’ and by this means ‘this pestilent religion hath crept into innumerable nations’. In The Preachers Travels (1611) John Cartwright suggested that Mahommad allowed his male followers to ‘couple themselves not only with one of the same sex, but with brute beasts also’. Francis Knight, an English Merchant who at the age of twenty-three was captured by Algerian corsairs and held captive for seven years, claimed that the Moors ‘are incorrigibly flagitious’, and ‘commit Sodomie with all creatures, and tolerate all vices’. It was alleged that even in Paradise Muslims would have their lusts fulfilled and be permitted to indulge in sodomitical behaviour. According to Rev. Edward Kellet, Muslims were promised in the afterlife ‘that beautiful Ganymedes shall serve at the Table and in a word, have their fill of all bestiall corporeall pleasures’. Sodomy is not explicitly condemned by the Qur’an although the punishment inflicted upon Lot’s people leaves little doubt as to how it should be regarded by Islam. However, some passages in the Qur’an were considered ambiguous and misinterpreted by Christians to suggest that sodomy was condoned. For example Sūrah 4:16 was frequently misinterpreted as referring to sodomy between men. The Hadīth are more severe and state that the active and the passive agent must be killed.

While visiting the Levant in the early seventeenth century to observe and gather knowledge about the Ottomans, Henry Blount (1602-1682) noted that in the

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55 The Policy of the Turkish Empire, p. 46. It was acknowledged that ‘Mahomet doth command that Sodomites should be stoned to death’ but that this law was ‘abrogated, or forgotten, or cleane neglected and contemned’, p. 46.
56 Aston, The Manners, Lawes and Customes of all Nations (London, 1611), A3r.
57 Ibid., p. 137.
59 Guilty of or addicted to atrocious crimes, deeply criminal, extremely wicked. See OED.
60 Knight, A Relation of Seven Yeares Slaverie, p. 50.
61 In Greek mythology Ganymede was the beautiful youth who succeeded Hebe as cupbearer to Zeus. There are cup-bearers as well as hūr in Islamic Paradise. Renaissance writers frequently alluded to the Ganymede myth. See for example Marlowe, Dido, Queen of Carthage (1586); Shakespeare, As You Like It (1623); John Mason, The Turk (1607). See DiGangi, The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama. The word ganymede was used to refer to a young male used for sexual purposes.
62 Kellet, A Return from Argier, p. 22.
65 Sūrah 4:16 ‘And the two who commit it [i.e. unlawful sexual intercourse] among you – punish them both’.
East sodomy was ‘not held a vice’. As a lone Christian travelling from Venice with a caravan of Turks and Jews bound for the Levant, Blount noted that as well as having their wives in their entourage

each Basha hath as many or likely more Catamites, which are their serious loves; for their Wifes are used (as the Turkes themselves told me) but to dresse their meat, to Laundresse, and for reputation; The Boyes likely of twelve, or fourteen years old, some of them not above nine, or ten, are usually clad in Velvet, or Scarlet, with guilt Scymitars, and bravely mounted, with sumptuous furniture.

Blount vouched for the veracity of his information and asserted that wives were used only for domestic duties and as a façade to conceal their husbands’ true passion which was for young, luxuriously clad boys. He later recorded an interesting event in which a wife who had been sodomized by her husband sought redress:

I saw at Adrianople a woman with many of her friends went weeping to a Judge where in his presence she tooke off her Shoe, and held it the sole upward, but spake nothing […] it was the ceremony used when a married woman complaines that her husband would abuse her against nature, which is the only cause, for which she may sue a divorce as shee then did, that delivery by way of Embleme, seemed neate, where the fact was too uncleane for language.

Blount inferred that in the Levantine courts the unmentionable, unclean act was too vile for language and was referred to silently by way of symbol, so as to lessen the victim’s humiliation.

However, the majority of travellers who comment on sodomy in the Ottoman Empire or the Barbary States describe it as being performed publicly in a frenzied, unbridled manner without any fear of condemnation or retribution. Of course if it were done privately it would have been difficult for travellers to claim to have been eye-witnesses to it. William Lithgow seems to have had a prurient interest in unnatural vice. On a visit to Fez, Morocco, in the early seventeenth century, he gave an unflattering account of the sexual appetites of its inhabitants and described a sordid orgy of carnality which he claimed to have witnessed:

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66 Henry Blount, A Voyage into the Levant (London, 1636), p. 70. There were eight editions over thirty-five years and a German edition in 1687. After the publication of his travels Blount won the favour of Charles I and was knighted on 21 March 1639. See ODNB.
68 Ibid., p. 106.
but worst of all in the Summer time, they openly Lycentiat but worst of all in the Summer time, they openly Lycentiat three thousand common Stewes of Sodomiticall Boyes: Nay I have seene at mid-day, in the very Market places, the Moores buggering these filthy Carrions, and without shame or punishment go freely away. Lithgow depicted a horrifically exaggerated scene where thousands of ‘sodomiticall boyes’ were buggered at mid-day in the heat of summer. He created a sordid image of flagrant licentious behaviour which occurred alongside the ordinary business of the marketplace and apparently went without punishment. The close proximity to animals and the dirt and grime of the souk added to the squalor of the scene. Samuel Purchas, quoting from the diary of Jean-Baptiste Gramaye’s (1579-1635) travels in Algiers, described a public display of bestiality:

In Iune Cid Bud a Morabute, at noone day before the Church, buggered a Mule, all applauding it, and crying out that it might be luckie, which often at other times we have signed [sighed] to see in Boyes.

The commentator claims authenticity for this incident by naming the perpetrator and specifying that he was a Muslim holy man who sacrilegiously committed this act in public before a sacred building.

Thomas Shirley (1564-1633/4), privateer and traveller, who was imprisoned in Istanbul from 1604 to 1605, described the boldness of the Turks in carrying out their sodomy in public with their ‘buggering boyes’. Shirley indignantly suggested that a decent Christian would not even do with his wife in private what these ‘infidels’ do with boys in public. Thomas Baker, the English consul in Tripoli from 1677-1685, recorded in his diary the ‘Rape of Buggery’ of a Dutch Renegado’s son in a tavern by two Turks. The noise that ensued drew a crowd of ‘dissolute fellow souldiers’, which resulted in the victim being gang-raped by thirty-four others. According to Baker, all of this occurred without shame or fear of punishment. Baker

69 To give liberty to; to allow; to permit. See OED.
70 Lithgow, pp. 366-67. In early modern usage a ‘stew’ was a brothel or bath-house. See OED.
72 Samuel Purchas, Purchas His Pilgrimes (London, 1625), vol. II, p. 1567. A marabout was a Muslim holy man, mystic or ascetic. See OED.
74 Pennell, Piracy, Entry June 30 1682/3. Pennell, editor of Baker’s diary, notes that Baker was ‘fascinated by sexual conduct and mores that differed from his own, particularly by homosexuality, which according to himself was quite acceptable in Tripoli’, p. 62.
also noted that ‘a Turk received 500 Drubbs upon his Buttocks not for having committed the Act of Sodomie with a Boy’ but for throwing him over the town wall afterwards and breaking his legs.\textsuperscript{75} Such accounts suggested that sodomy was permitted rather than punished.

**Captives and Sodomy**

It was feared that contact with the diverse sexual proclivities of Muslim sodomites threatened the passive Christian male body. Nicolas de Nicolay (1517-1583), who travelled to Istanbul in 1551 as part of an official French embassy, suggested that the vices of Muslims were easily transferred – particularly to Christians who had reneged on their faith:

> Most part of the Turkes of Algier, whether they be of the Kings Household or the Gallies, are Christians reined, or Muhametised, of all Nations […] given to all Whoredome, Sodometrie, Theft, and all other most detestable vices.\textsuperscript{76}

Conversion to Islam was wrought through the penetration of the captive’s body and was imagined to entail some degree of sexual interference. Apostates were charged with having been sexually violated or having altered their sexual preferences. In one of the earliest accounts of Christian captivity among Muslims, in the mid-sixteenth century, the Hungarian captive Bartholomew Georgijevic stated that young, attractive male captives were subjected to the ‘unnatural lust and lecherye’ of the Turks.\textsuperscript{77} The German cosmographer Sebastian Münster (1488-1552) described how Christians taken by the Turks were abused and tormented:

> The night is more hea\textsuperscript{78}vy unto them, for then either they are shut up in strong holds, or else are compelled to suffer the filthy lust of those that have bought them, and great lamentation is heard in the night time both of young men and young women, suffering much violence, so that they spare not them of six or seven years of age in this misery, such is the cruellness of that filthy nation, against nature in the rage of voluptuousness.

Again age or gender was of little consequence to the perpetrators who allegedly preyed on the incarcerated captives with impunity. In ‘The Worthy Enterprise of John Fox’ included in Hakluyt’s *Principall Navigations* (1589) the author states that

\textsuperscript{75} Pennell, *Piracy*, p. 133. Diary entry 15 October 1680. A drub was a stroke given in punishment with a cudgel. See *OED*,

\textsuperscript{76} Nicolay, p. 8. On his return to France Nicolay became royal geographer to King Henry II.

\textsuperscript{77} Georgijevic, *The Ofspring of the House of Ottomanno, G7r*. Georgijevic spent thirteen years in captivity in Istanbul following the Hungarian defeat by the Ottomans at Mohács, Hungary, in 1525.

\textsuperscript{78} Münster, *A briefe collection*, pp. 50-51.
it would have ‘grieved any hard heart to see these Infidels so violently intreating the Christians, not having any respect of their manhood which they had tasted of’. Disrespecting their manhood may suggest a number of scenarios of which sexual violation is a possibility. John Rawlins, a sailor enslaved in Algiers in 1621, recounted that more than ‘a hundred handsome youths [were] compelled to turn Turk or made subject to more vilder prostitution – and all English!’ Rawlins emphasized the sexual danger and the ‘mischiefs’ the captives were threatened with from the ‘filthiness and impieties’ of their captors. An account by Thomas Saunders, who was held captive in Barbary in 1583, claimed that the son of the king of Tripoli ‘greatly fancied’ two young Christian captives whom he wished to have ‘turne Turkes’. According to Saunders they were forcibly circumcised, compelled to wear the Turkish habit and ‘violently used’. The captive James Deane, who was captured by Algerian pirates in 1679, suggested that his body and soul were at risk from the ‘detestable solicitations of their most unnatural Lusts’. He alleged that his captors were ‘so filthy as to mix with Brute Beast having seen such Evidences of their abomination in that kind, with some Creatures that were on Board’. Joseph Pitts (b. 1663) of Exeter, who spent fifteen years as a captive in Algiers in the late seventeenth century, claimed that there were many ‘so addicted to this prodigious sin that they loathe the natural use of the woman’. He warned that boys were particularly at risk of attack:

insomuch that it is very dangerous for any woman to walk in any by-place but more dangerous for boys, for they are extremely given to sodomy […] And yet this horrible sin of sodomy is so far from being punished amongst them that it is part of their ordinary discourse to boast and brag of their detestable actions of that kind. ’Tis common for men to fall in love with boys as ’tis here in England to be in love with women.

82 Saunders, Ciir.
84 Pitts, *A True and Faithful Account*, p. 18.
85 Ibid., p. 18.
Pitts denounced the detestable sin of sodomy, but rather than seeing it as a purely deviant sexual act, he suggested that men fell in love with boys.\textsuperscript{86} He claimed to have seen men giving themselves ‘deep gashes’ on their arms with a knife to represent ‘the love they bear to such a boy’ and some men had their arms ‘full of great cuts, as so many tokens of their love […] to such their catamites’.\textsuperscript{87} Pitts found the subject so unnatural that he was ashamed to elaborate further on it as it would be ‘disgustful’ to every modest, Christian reader.\textsuperscript{88}

The captive Mr. T. S. described how the ‘king of Argiers’, who was ‘a greater lover of his Pleasures than of his Money’, chose for himself a ‘pretty German boy of a ruddy Countenance’ who would bring him pleasure in his old age.\textsuperscript{89} James Wadsworth, who was enslaved in Salé in the early seventeenth century, also tells of the predilection of his captors for fair young boys, ‘whose bodies they abuse with their Sodomy’.\textsuperscript{90} He alleged that shortly after being captured two Moors selected two of the youngest and fairest amongst us, abused their bodies with insatiable lust, and on the next morning they stripping themselves stark naked and powring out water one upon the others head, supposed by this washing they were cleansed from their new acted sinne.\textsuperscript{91}

Wadsworth goes on to suggest that for the unfortunate captives there was always the threat of worse to come:

their masters were further iraged, and having comphotted together, said they would have them to be gelded, and to be sent for Eunches as a present to the King of Marruecos to attend upon his 300 wives.\textsuperscript{92}

The captives’ manhood was portrayed as being under constant risk of attack from sodomy, circumcision or castration. In \textit{Robinson Crusoe} (1719) Daniel Defoe draws on the trope of the young Christian male being acquired for the sexual proclivity of a ruthless master.\textsuperscript{93} When captured by Salé Rovers Crusoe was ‘kept by the captain of the rover, as his proper prize and made his slave, being young and nimble and fit for

\textsuperscript{86} Pitts, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{89} \textit{The Adventures of Mr. T.S.}, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., pp. 38-39.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., pp. 43-44.
\textsuperscript{93} Daniel Defoe, \textit{Robinson Crusoe} (London, 1719).
his business’. 94 Exactly what this business was can be deduced from the fact that the ship contained a ‘cabin which lay very snug and low, and had in it room for him to lie with a slave or two’. 95

In *A Description of the Nature of Slavery among the Moors and the Cruel Sufferings of those that fall into it* (1721), the anonymous author, who describes himself as ‘one of the fair redeem’d Captives’, reinforced the notion of the mindless depravity of the Moors by suggesting that to celebrate the birth of his son, the prince used two handsome young men for ‘his own brutish lusts’:

one of his Favourite Sultanas an English Woman, that by the Means of insupportable Cruelties, was forc’d to embrace Mahometanism, was that very Day brought to Bed of a Son; In Joy for which, he after making Choice of two young Men, one James Richards and Henry Negus, who were very handsome Lads, of about 17 Years of Age, for his own brutish Lusts. 96

This passage vilifies the Moors while also highlighting the loss of Christian souls to ‘Mahometanism’. A nameless English woman forced ‘by insupportable cruelties’ to embrace Islam gives birth to a son who will grow up in the Muslim faith; and, to celebrate the happy event two young English men are allegedly sodomized. To emphasize the authenticity, and give added credibility to his account the author named the unfortunate male victims of the Prince’s partiality.

Adam Elliot (1645/6-1700), ‘Master of Arts, and a Priest of the Church of England’, who was held captive in Morocco in 1670, went a step further than other captives and described an actual attempt by his own master to sodomize him:

the Brute raises himself up a little, and mutters somewhat to me of a not-to-be-mentioned Carnality, not only unworthy of Christian ears, but the bare mention whereof offers violence to the dictates of Nature, and which my charity would never suffer me to believe that it could enter into any mans mind, unless I had heard of the Citizens of Sodom, and a Doctor of Salamanca. 97

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96 *A Description of the Nature of Slavery among the Moors and the Cruel Sufferings of those that fall into it* (London, 1721), pp. 4-5. The English woman is also mentioned in Brooks, *Barbarian Cruelty*, pp. 27-32; and in Dominique Busnot, *The History of the Reign of Muley Ismael, the present King of Morocco, Fez, Tafilet, Sous &c ... By F. Dominick Busnot* (London, 1715), pp. 50-51.

The ‘Doctor of Salamanca’ was the informer Titus Oates who was the principal figure in the Popish Plot. He had accused Elliot of involvement in the Popish Plot, of renouncing Christianity and ‘turning Turk’ as well as being a ‘Circumsis’d Jesuit’.  

Elliot’s account is unusual in that rather than describing a sexual attack on another person, it is a first-person portrayal of an attempted sodomitical approach. Although other travellers and captives claim to have witnessed acts of sodomy, or claim to know of young, handsome and fair men who were sodomized, none refer to the practice in relation to themselves. It must be borne in mind that Elliot used this episode to allude to the sexual deviance of Titus Oates who was accused of sodomy in 1676.

**Sodomy, Eating and Luxury**

Sodomy was frequently referred to as the ‘sinne of luxurie against nature’ which by inference attached it to elite members of society. The sins of Sodom were envisaged as pride, luxury and idleness. Edward Coke suggested: ‘the Sodomites came to this abomination by four means, viz by pride, excess of diet, idlenesse and contempt of the poor’. These were vices which Muslims were accused of possessing in abundance and which allegedly led them to degeneracy. In many travel accounts and captivity narratives sodomy, luxury and eating are closely linked. Lavish wealth and a surplus of time were considered a dangerous combination. Describing the inhabitants of Algiers, William Davies deduced that ‘they are altogether Sodomites’, as, contrary to Christians, ‘their feeding and diet is very plentifull, their bedding and apparel very neat and costly’. In the Levant Nicolay attached luxury and sodomy to members of a religious sect which he called ‘pilgrimes of love’, who, under pretext of religion, attracted the affections of women

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98 Oates claimed to have received a doctorate from Salamanca, Spain. He was expelled as navy chaplain after being accused of sodomy. For more on Oates see Jane Lane, *Titus Oates* (London: Andrew Dakers, 1949); see also Tom Browne, *The Salamanca Wedding* (London, 1693); Anon, *A Hue and Cry after Dr. T.O.* (London, 1681); and ODNB.

99 Nicolay, p. 100. Associating sodomy with elite society was something that had also been done by Europeans in their encounters in the New World. Pietro Martire d’Anghiera’s *De orbe novo decades*, translated (in part) into English by Richard Eden in 1555, lays the blame for sodomy on the privileged: ‘this stinkynge abomination hadde not yet entered among the people, but was exercised onely by the noble men and gentlemen […] God was greviously offended with such yle deedes’. *The Decades of the Newe Worlde or West India* (London, 1555), p. 90. Eden’s translation was a compilation of Anghiera’s *De orbe novo decades*, Gonzalo Oviedo’s *Historia General y Natural de las Indias* and other works.

100 Coke, *The Third Part of the Institutes*, p. 59.

and the ‘fairest yonglings’.\footnote{Nicolay, p. 100. He accused two other religious sects, the Dervis and the Torlaquis, of sodomy and luxury, pp. 102-105.} He also noted the sexual abstinence of another religious sect, the Calenders, but attributes this to the fact that

under their privy members they do pierce the skin, thrusting through the same a ring of iron or silver of an indifferent bigness and weight, to the intent that being thus buckled, they can by no manner of means use luxury\footnote{Nicolay, p. 101.} (Figure 8).

Sir Paul Rycaut (1629-1700) alleged that the ‘abominable vice of Sodomie, which the Turks pretend to have learned from the Italians’, was common ‘especially amongst the Persons of the great Quality, who have means and time to act and contrive their filthiness with the most deformity’.\footnote{Rycaut, \textit{The Present State of the Ottoman Empire}, p. 81. Caroline Bingham asserts that in England ‘buggery seemed largely to be an upper-class practice, and that the cavaliers were courtiers in curls’, p. 470.}

![Figure 8. Calender a Religious Turke. Nicolas de Nicolay, \textit{The Navigations, Peregrinations and Voyages, made into Turkie by Nicholas Nicholay}, trans. Thomas Washington (London, 1585)](image)

William Lithgow asserted that the Turks were ‘extremely inclined to all sorts of lascivious luxury; and generally addicted besides all their sensual and incestuous lusts, unto sodomy, which they account as a dainty to digest [with] all their other..."
libidinous pleasures’. Sodomy and digestion are closely entwined. Over-indulgence in food was thought to encourage sexual temptation and excess. Ruth Karras states that ‘food permitted the existence of the flesh […] a flesh which always carried within it the risk of carnal, notably sexual, sin’. William of Adam’s fourteenth-century account of Christian slaves fattened for sale emphasized the association between food, corpulent flesh and sex:

And when they are able to find some boy, Christian or Tartar, suitable in body, as he is dispatched for sale, no supplication is too dear for the sake of those whom, more apt to total sinfulness of this sort, they seek. After they buy them, like a statue, they are dressed in silk and covered in gold, their bodies and faces are washed often in baths and other washings. And they are fed sumptuous meals and delicate beverages to make them plumper, pinker, and more voluptuous, and thus when the libidinous vile and abominable men, the Saracens, corrupters of human nature, see the boys, they immediately burn with lust for them and, like mad dogs, race to buy the boys for themselves so that they can have their evil way with them.

Ripe for consumption, the boys’ youthful bodies were allegedly scrubbed until radiant and bedecked in luxurious clothing to incite the passion of libidinous customers and to satisfy their ravenous appetites. On this account, sumptuous tastes, fine clothing, rich food and ample leisure would ultimately lead to depravity of a filthy and beastly nature.

In his captivity narrative, Pitts included a chapter heading with an interesting incongruity: ‘An Account of the Turks’ Manner of Eating; They are much addicted to the Cursed and Unnatural Sin of Sodomy’. The implication is that sodomy, an act considered unnatural to Christians was as natural to Muslims as eating and something as vital to their existence as consuming food. Pitts described how the Turks sit ‘cross-legged, as tailors’ at low round tables to eat their victuals, attended

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106 Karras, p. 152.
107 Gulielmus Adae (Guillaume Adam), *De modo Saracenos extirpandi*, quoted in Michael Uebel, ‘Re-Orienting Desire: Writing on Gender Trouble in Fourteenth-Century Egypt’, p. 244. See Gulielmus Adae, *De modo Saracenos extirpandi*, vol 2 of *Receuil des historiens des croisades Armeniens* (Paris, 1841-1906). William of Adam was a Dominican monk. He was sent to Persia by Pope John XXII. *How to Defeat the Saracens* was written in approximately 1317. In June 1323 he became Archbishop of Soltanieh in northern Iran. He died in 1329.
108 Pitts, p. 16.
109 Food had great significance for early modern people and was ‘a focal point for society’s obsessions’. See Karras, pp. 151-52. See also Joan Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007).
by slaves who serve them cups of water to drink.\textsuperscript{110} Although he acknowledged that ‘wine is forbidden by the Mohammetan law’ he reiterated that when the Turks had overindulged in alcohol ‘they are extremely given to sodomy’.\textsuperscript{111} He suggested that the consumption of alcohol was a contributory factor in licentious acts:

intemperance in drinking hurries men on to the worst of vices, and though the inclination of these hot people and the countenance that is given to such crimes are too great incentives, yet, avoiding intemperance, they would be less liable to them.\textsuperscript{112}

Though the climate and general tolerance are cited as incentives to sodomy, Pitts argued that it was intemperance which encouraged men to commit sodomy, suggesting it was not an inherent, natural condition of the Turks (as claimed by others) but one induced by the consumption of alcohol.

When originally captured, Pitts also expressed the misconceived fear that the ‘monstrous ravenous Creatures […] will kill us, and eat us’.\textsuperscript{113} This highlights not only the extreme terror inspired by captivity but the radical degree of difference that was imagined to exist between Muslims and Christians. Matar asserts that this is the first time a reference to cannibalism had appeared in anti-Muslim writings.\textsuperscript{114} However, in the early seventeenth century the political agent, John Harrison, who travelled to Morocco on eight separate occasions to redeem Christians, suggested that Abd-al Malik, sultan of Morocco from 1627-1631, had cannibalistic tendencies: ‘Yea he himself cut a piece of the brawne of a man’s arm whom he had killed, broiled it on the coales, and did eat it’.\textsuperscript{115} The English captive, Mr. T. S., who

\textsuperscript{110} Pitts, p. 16. Pitts’s linking of eating and sodomy echoes early descriptions of the customs of the inhabitants of the New World. Cortés writing from Vera Cruz in July 1519 says that in addition to the ‘great evils which they [the local inhabitants] practice in the service of the Devil’, including the sacrifice of women and children, ‘they are all sodomites and practice that abominable sin’. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, Historia General y Natural de las Indias (1526) connects cannibalism and sodomy: ‘The Indians eat human flesh and are sodomites’. In Bernal Diaz del Castillo’s, The Conquest of New Spain, human sacrifice is attached to sodomy. See Goldberg, pp. 193-202.

\textsuperscript{111} Pitts, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p. 3.

\textsuperscript{114} Matar, Turks, Moors and Englishmen, p. 169.

\textsuperscript{115} Harrison, The Tragical Life and Death of Muley Abdala Melek, p. 16. The fourteenth-century romance Richard Coer de Lion which survives in seven manuscripts includes an episode during the Third Crusade in which the English king, Richard I, engages in cannibalism. Richard becomes ill in Acre and asks for pork. Saracen’s flesh is boiled and served to the unsuspecting king who devours it, recovers his health and is victorious in battle. On discovering he has dined on a Saracen’s head he comments that no Christian need go hungry as long as there are Saracens to kill. After Acre surrenders, Richard serves the boiled heads of Saracen prisoners to Saladin’s envoys, even supplying nametags to identify them. Richard warns that he and his army will remain in the Levant until they have eaten every living Saracen. This cannibalistic debacle dehumanises Muslims and reduces them
claimed to have been a captive in Algiers between 1648 and 1652, suggested that two Spanish renegades, whom he encountered on first landing in Algiers, had developed cannibalistic tastes:

One amongst the rest was animated with a strange fury and desire of revenge for the death of his dear Comrade; both were Spanish Renegadoes [...] I know not how it happened that he came near one of us, and with a Blow struck off part of the Cheek of a German, which he took and greedily swallowed, telling the Assistants that he never tasted so sweet a Morsel in his days as that was; so strangely Vengeance had transported him, that he was content to feed upon us.116

Christians were allegedly in acute danger of being penetrated or devoured. Or, worse still it was feared that Christian renegades could develop the unnatural predilections of Muslims and turn on their fellow Christians. Accounts of sodomy, cannibalism and sexual debauchery were interchangeable and were applied indiscriminately to Moors in Spain, the inhabitants of the New World, or Muslims in the Levant and North Africa.

It was suggested, and hoped, that the Ottoman Empire might eventually collapse due to sexual corruption.117 Jonathan Burton suggests that wealth, luxury and power were imagined as ‘transforming the militaristic Turkish prince into a feminized palace idler’.118 Paul Rycaut blamed sodomy for a lack of fecundity amongst the Turks. He claimed that ‘the natural use of the Women’ is ‘neglected amongst them’ as men burned with lust for each other.119 He suggested that ‘so little is mankind propagated’ that were it not for the abundant supplies of slaves ‘the Turk would have little cause to boast for the vast numbers of his people’.120 He argued that the greatness of princes and empires consisted in the ‘numbers and multitudes of their people’.121 According to Rycaut the polygamous and sodomitical Turks were ‘less fruitful in Children, then those who confine themselves to the chaste embraces

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116 The Adventures of Mr. T.S., p. 22.
117 Ibid.
118 Burton, ‘Western Encounters with Sex and Bodies in Non-European Cultures’, p. 504.
119 Rycaut, p. 81.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
of one Wife’, so that in time, due to their propensity to sodomy, the Turkish population would be depleted.\textsuperscript{122}

The diminution of England’s population was a concern for political economists who believed that people were the riches of a nation so anything that threatened its population was viewed with horror.\textsuperscript{123} Sir Josiah Child (1630-1699), merchant and economic theorist, wrote in \textit{A New Discourse of Trade} (1698), that ‘most Nations in the Civilized Parts of the World are more or less Rich or Poor proportionably to the Paucity or Plenty of their People, and not to the Sterility or Fruitfulness of their Lands’.\textsuperscript{124} For a country to be rich its people must be fertile and productive. Sodomy thwarted the real function of sexual intercourse – reproduction of the species.\textsuperscript{125} It was an assault on the sanctity of marriage, the family and stability. Hans Turley suggests that the sexual behaviour of the sodomite represented an implicit economic transgression against the gendered model of the transmission of capital through inheritance.\textsuperscript{126} The 1699 Preface to the account of the trial of Lord Castlehaven makes it abundantly clear that sodomy would lead to barrenness and devastation:

Another abomination that shocks our Natures, and puts our Modesty to the Blush, to see it so commonly perpetrated, is the Devilish and Unnatural Sin of Buggery. A Crime that sinks a Man below the basest Epithet, is so Foul it admits of no Aggravation, and cannot be express’d in its Horror, but by the Doleful Shrikes and Groans of the Damned. A Sin that caus’d God Almighty […] to Rain down Hell-Fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah and turn a Fruitful and Pleasant Country, into utter Barrenness and Desolation.\textsuperscript{127}

Sex and reproduction were inextricably linked. Sodomy was a sterile, fruitless sexual act, void of any reproductive capabilities and as such could be antithetical to the economic growth and military strength of England.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{122} Rycaut, p. 81
\textsuperscript{124} Quoted in Landa, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{125} McFarlane, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{127} \textit{The Tryal and Condemnation of Mervin Lord Audley, Earl of Castle-Haven, at Westminster, April the 5\textsuperscript{th} 1631. For abetting a Rape upon his Countess, Committing Sodomy with his Servants, and Commanding and Countenancing the Debauching of his Daughter} (London, 1699), A3r. In April, 1631, Mervyn Touchet, Second Earl of Castlehaven was found guilty of rape and sodomy. He was beheaded on 14 May 1631. See Bingham, pp. 447-68.
\textsuperscript{128} McFarlane, p. 54.
Critics have drawn attention to the multiple meanings of the term sodomy that existed in early modern England. Sodomy was ‘unrepresentable’, a ‘category of forbidden acts’, ‘a cluster of associations without location’ and a ‘crime not to be named among Christians’. While sodomy did occur at home and accusations of sexual deviance were rampant, it was suggested to originate and flourish beyond England’s borders. This chapter has shown that when applied to the Islamic world sodomy held specifically sexual connotations. Attributing sodomitical behaviour to Muslims created ‘an incontestable dividing line’ between civilized Christians and Muslim barbarians. Accusations of sodomy contributed to their demonisation and to their otherness. The predicament of Christians held captive in Islamic lands where sodomy was reported to be rife was a particular source of anxiety. There was constant intimation that the unfortunate captive, or indeed the unsuspecting traveller, would be contaminated by licentious practices which he in turn could pass on to others, with deadly repercussions for the whole of society. Christian captives that turned Turk were accused of having passively submitted to sexual defilement and emasculation. The corruption and disorder of ‘that Masculine misery’, if allowed to take root, would defile and disrupt, and lead to the self-destruction of civilized English society.

129 McFarlane, p. 25. See also p. 184 n.1; Hammond, p.88.
130 Matar, Turks, Moors, and Englishmen, p. 113.
Great Ey’d Ladies

Chapter 4

‘Great Ey’d Ladies’: The seductive allure of Islam

The Victorian explorer Richard Burton (1821-1890) suggested that ‘the first question of mankind to the wanderer’ was ‘what are the Women like?’1 The traveller was assumed to be a Western male addressing a similarly imagined male readership.2 Karen Lawrence succinctly asserts that women are ‘mapped as a place on the itinerary of the male journey’.3 Foreign women were documented as part of the many interesting attractions encountered during travel. Virtually all early modern travellers or captives who spent time in the Levant and North Africa and recorded their experiences commented on, criticised or complimented the women and their role in society. In Western discourse the temptation to forsake one’s religion and embrace Islam was personified by exaggerated portrayals of alluring Eastern women, and was recounted by travellers as early as the fictitious traveller Sir John Mandeville.4 He claimed that the Sultan of Egypt ‘would have married me richly with a great prince’s daughter and given me many great lordships so that I would have forsaken my belief and turned to theirs; but I could not’.5 Alongside these narratives were accounts of innocent Christian women held captive and forced to convert by lecherous masters,

5 John Mandeville, Mandeville’s Travels: Texts and Translations, ed. by Malcolm Letts (London: Hakluyt Society, 1953), p. 95. The anonymous Voyages de Jean de Mandeville chevalier appeared in France c. 1357. Its narrator, Sir John Mandeville claimed to have been born in St. Albans, left England to travel the world in 1322 and recorded his travels in 1357. He presented his text as a guide to the Holy Land as well as a description of Asia. He claimed to have served the sultan of Cairo and visited the Great Khan. The account can be traced to sources ranging from Pliny to Vincent of Beauvais. He was widely read with translations being made into English, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Irish and Czech. See ODNB. Drawing on the accounts of Marco Polo (1254-1324) and Odoric of Pordenone (1286-1331), Mandeville tells the story of Gatholonabes an ‘old man of the mountain’, who created a sensual paradise on the island of Mistorak in the lands of Prester John: ‘And he had also, in that place, the fairest damsels that might be found under the age of fifteen years, and the fairest young striplings that men might get […] And there should they dwell […] and play with them evermore’. Quoted in Jean Delumeau, History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition, trans. by Matthew O’Connell (New York: Continuum, 1995), p. 83.
which warned of the danger of captivity for women. Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly suggest that these two contrasting images of women highlight ‘the rigid stereotypes’ of native female abandon and white female chastity which existed in early modern discourse.

This chapter firstly surveys representations by travellers and captives of harem women. These secluded women provided endless scope for the imagination and became an almost obligatory sub-genre of travel accounts. The origin of the women, their treatment in the harem, their sexuality and their allure was tirelessly discussed. Male captives who claimed to have access to forbidden female spaces recounted their staunch resistance to sexual entrapment and conversion. Some created elaborate fantasies of sexual conquest and romantic entanglements but warned of the inherent threat of conversion attached to such liaisons. The second section of the chapter will focus on the portrayal of female Christian captives in male authored accounts. These women were reported on sporadically as they were glimpsed in the slave markets of Istanbul and Barbary, destined for the harems that would incarcerate them. Particular attention was given to the sale and violation of Christian virgins. In early modern England, virginity was a highly valued commodity, the retention of which was relevant as proof of not having capitulated to [foreign] temptation. As conversion and the sexual conquest of the Christian female body were indelibly linked, chaste, virginal Christian women served as a defence against the onslaught of Islam.

**Travellers’ descriptions of Eastern women and the harem**

Amidst descriptions of military fortifications, fabulous fashions and outrageous rituals, lengthy passages in travelogues were devoted to the appearance, habits, sexual mores and allure of foreign women. Like other aspects of Islamic culture reported on by Westerners, these accounts of Muslim women were invariably a compilation of repeated stereotypes, glaring contradictions or extreme fantasies. Western writers alleged that Muslim women received little religious instruction,

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8 For early modern Christian women (other than nuns) virginity was a transient state to be preserved until a husband was acquired through marriage. See Theodore A. Jankowski, *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. 117.
were not allowed in mosques and were excluded from paradise. Thomas Dallam reported from Algiers in 1599 that ‘the Turkish and Moorish women do go all ways in the streets with their faces covered and the common report goes there that they believe, or think that the women have no souls’. They were also considered lazy, sexually incontinent and cruelly oppressed. However, to attract readers and stimulate interest there were few more fruitful topics than the sexual activities of exotic women. These women were portrayed as teasing temptresses with little to do except entice vulnerable Christian males to convert to Islam, or described as lascivious lesbians engaged in salacious sexual acts in the impenetrable inner sanctums of the seraglio. Many travellers’ and captives’ accounts provide cautionary tales, as they describe their staunch resistance to female temptation, reaffirm their Christian faith, validate their national identity, and swear allegiance to their monarch. Other accounts offered a distinct element of seduction as Christian

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9 See Jane I. Smith and Yvonne Y. Haddad, ‘Women in the Afterlife: The Islamic View as Seen from Qur’an and Tradition’, Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 43.1 (1975), 39-50. The notion that Muslim women were precluded from paradise or had no souls was asserted in many Western accounts. Ottaviano Bon suggested that there was ‘no heed taken, or reckoning made’ of women’s religion, A Description of the Grand Signour’s Seraglio or Turkish Emperours Court (London, 1650), p. 190. Aaron Hill acknowledged that Muslim women had souls but they were inferior to male souls: ‘As God has given them a soul inferior to that of Man he exacts less service from the Female Sex, which he only created for the Use and Satisfaction of the nobler Males’, A Full and Just Account of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire (London, 1709), pp. 111. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was one of the first to challenge these perceptions. In a letter to the Italian polymath, Abbé Antonio Conti (1677-1749), she declared: ‘I assure you ’tis certainly false though commonly believ’d in our Parts of the World, that Mahomet excludes Women from any Share in a future happy State. He was too much a Gentleman, and lov’d the Fair Sex too well, to use ’em so barbarously. On the contrary, he promises a very fine Paradise to the Turkish women’. Lady Mary suggested that this paradise would be a separate place from that of their husbands. Anon., The Genuine Copy of a Letter written from Constantinople by an English Lady, who was lately in Turkey, and who is no less distinguish’d by her Wit than by her Quality; to a Venetian Nobleman, one of the prime Virtuosi of the Age (London, 1719), p. 4. Germain Mouéette noted that women were ‘look’d upon as incapable of entering into Heaven, their husbands saying, they were only created for Generation’, The travels of the Sieur Mouéette, in the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco, during his eleven years captivity in those parts (London, 1710), p. 96. John Windus, writing from Morocco in 1721, suggested that the women ‘are not suffered to go to Church, lest the Devotion of the Men should be interrupted by their presence, but have a set Form of Prayers and Ceremonies to be performed at Home’, A Journey to Mequinez (London, 1725), p. 39.


11 It should be noted that Islamic visitors to Christian lands were equally interested in the habits of Western women. See Europe Observed: Multiple Gazes in Early Modern Encounters, ed. by Kumkum Chatterjee and Clement Hawes (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2008).

12 The captive Francis Knight noted that the Algerian women were ‘most impudent and addicted to all kinds of unnaturalinese, yet greedy lovers of money’, Knight, A Relation of Seaven Yeares Slaverie, p. 40.
appetites were whetted by the women, wealth and pleasure-orientated aspects of Islam.\textsuperscript{13}

This preoccupation with female habits and customs was intensified by the almost complete inaccessibility of Muslim women.\textsuperscript{14} Shirley Foster states that the harem\textsuperscript{15} or seraglio\textsuperscript{16} was imagined as a ‘site of sexual licence, forbidden territory, a segregated space barred to men and charged with erotic significance, about which “knowledge” could be only voyeuristically obtained and imaginatively reproduced’.\textsuperscript{17} The traveller’s authority depended on delivering first-hand eyewitness accounts but harems stubbornly resisted penetration by the gaze of the Western male.\textsuperscript{18} Ruth Yeazell observes that although Europeans were fascinated by what they could discover about the harem, ‘what they could only imagine excited them still more’.\textsuperscript{19} Authors did not distinguish between various harems but fixated on ‘the’ harem in the Ottoman palace in Istanbul, the Imperial Seraglio.\textsuperscript{20} Billie Melman describes the Sultan’s court with its women’s quarters as the ‘most impenetrable territory in the Ottoman Empire’ which was ‘hermetically sealed to adult males other than the Sultan himself and his sons and the black eunuchs’.\textsuperscript{21} In

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\bibitem{13} Wilson, 	extit{Pirate Utopias}, p. 21.
\bibitem{14} Jewel merchant Jean Baptiste Tavernier (1605-1689) included a chapter on the apartments of the women, but alerted the reader to ‘the impossibility there is of having a perfect knowledge of it or getting any exact account’, 	extit{Collections of Travels through Turky into Persia, and the East-Indies}, p. 83.
\bibitem{15} The word harem comes from the Arabic ‘haraam’ meaning forbidden or sacred. Its earliest use in English was in 1634 in Thomas Herbert’s 	extit{A Relation of some yeares travaile} (London, 1634), p. 62. In Turkish it is 	extit{harēmlik}, meaning the place of the sanctuary. See Ruth Bernard Yeazell, 	extit{Harems of the Mind: Passages of Western Art and Literature} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 1-2. Leslie Peirce states that ‘a harem is by definition a sanctuary or a sacred precinct […] it is a space to which general access is forbidden or controlled and in which the presence of certain individuals […] males beyond a particular degree of consanguinity with the resident females […] or certain modes of behaviour are forbidden’, 	extit{The Imperial Harem}, pp. 3-5. See also N. M. Penzer, 	extit{The Harem: An Account of the Institution as it existed in the Palace of the Turkish Sultans with a History of the Grand Seraglio from its Foundation to Modern Times} (London: Spring Books, 1936).
\bibitem{16} The 	extit{OED} describes the etymology of seraglio as Italian and defines it as an enclosure or place of confinement; the part of a Muslim dwelling house in which the women are secluded; it was also a place where wild beasts were kept. It was sometimes used to describe the Sultan’s palace. Its earliest use in English was in 1581 in Barnabe Riche’s story of Finoe and Fiamma: ‘And beeyng moved with the beautie of the yong Gentlewoman […] caused her to be put in the Cube, whiche is a place where he keepeth his Concubines (as the Turke dooth his in his Serraqlio) among a greate manie of other women’, 	extit{Riche his Farewell to Militarie Profession} (London, 1581). The word seraglio was more commonly used than harem.
\bibitem{17} Shirley Foster, ‘Colonialism and Gender in the East: Representations of the Harem in the Writings of Women Travellers’, 	extit{The Yearbook of English Studies}, 34 (2004), 6-17, (p. 7).
\bibitem{18} Banerjee, pp. 264-65.
\bibitem{19} Yeazell, p. 1.
\bibitem{20} Ibid., p. 2.
\end{thebibliography}
Western accounts, as Malek Alloula argues, the harem became ‘a universe of generalized perversion’ which promised the ‘absolute limitlessness of pleasure’. Simply alluding to the harem was enough to trigger the imagination with an erotic representation of the forbidden. Alloula describes the harem as the ‘very embodiment’ of the West’s obsession with the East. As Western culture placed increasing emphasis on heterosexual monogamy some men looked enviously at the polygamous East as a ‘masculine paradise’ where access to a multitude of women was actively sanctioned. Melman suggests that ‘the harem as the locus of an exotic and abnormal sexuality fascinated Westerners’ and was ‘simultaneously tempting and threatening’.

Writing in the early eighteenth century, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu criticized male travellers who had travelled in the Levant before her and who never failed to give ‘an Account of the Women, which ’tis certain they never saw’. Lady Mary participated in and reported on the activities of Muslim women and the customs observed in harems and bagnios, and boasted of being the first foreigner ever to have had the pleasure of ‘forming friendships with Turkish ladies’. Although many of Lady Mary’s letters were written as a response to the vulgar stereotypes of Turkish women perpetuated by Christian men, they are at times ambiguous and complex and have attracted criticism since they were first

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23 Ibid., p. 3.
24 Yeazell, p. 5.
25 Melman, pp. 60-61.
26 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M-y W-y M-e: written during her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa, to Persons of Distinction, Men of Letters & c. in Different Parts of Europe, Which Contain, Among Other Curious Relations, Accounts of the Policy and Manners of the Turks: Drawn from Sources that Have Been Inaccessible to Other Travellers*, 3 vols (London, 1763), Vol. II, p. 131. In 1716 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu accompanied her husband, Edward Wortley Montagu, to the Ottoman Empire when he was appointed ambassador of George I to Sultan Ahmet III and representative of the Levant Company. Edward Wortley Montagu failed in his diplomatic tasks and was recalled after only eighteen months. Lady Mary’s *Embassy Letters* were published posthumously in 1763, over forty years after their initial composition. Robert Halsband, editor of *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965-67), suggests that the manuscript of the *Turkish Embassy Letters* was composed from copies of letters Lady Mary had written from Turkey, and that they may have been meant for publication as a travel memoir. He points out that they are not the actual letters she sent to her correspondents but are a compilation of pseudo-letters. Before her death Lady Mary gave her manuscript to Reverend Sowden and it was published by Becket and De Hondt on 7 May 1763. It first appeared in three small octavo volumes. See Isobel Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
Lady Mary ostensibly attempted to de-eroticise the objectified Turkish women, but her appreciation of the women’s beauty and nude bodies retained suggestive sexual undercurrents and maintained the power to titillate. Her descriptions of the harem and her admiration of the women’s beauty and nude bodies retained suggestive sexual undercurrents and maintained the power to titillate. Lady Mary articulates her appreciation of the women by using established male literary and rhetorical conventions which continued to malign women. She was also heavily influenced by *The Arabian Nights* and saw the tales ‘as a real representation’ of Turkish customs and a reference text to the East and a guide to cultural and ethnographic detail.

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29 Bohls, p. 31.

30 Lowe, p. 48.

31 Yeazell, p. 19. The most significant manifestation of Western interest in the harem and all things Eastern was Antoine Galland’s (1646-1715) *Mille et Une Nuits* in twelve volumes published between 1704 and 1717. Parts of these were translated anonymously and published in English from 1706. As ‘Arabian Nights’ Entertainments’ it was serialised over three years in 455 instalments by the *London News*. The tales, the *Alf Laila wa Laila* that became known in the West as the Arabian Nights had their origins in the oral folklore of Persia, India, Syria, Egypt and Iraq. Some of these stories may have been known in Europe as early as the fifteenth century. The tales were originally narrated to a male audience as lewd entertainment. They were radically altered in translation, were warmly received in the West and had a significant influence on Western literature. The frame tale contained all the elements of Eastern intrigue and fantasy while affirming negative stereotypes of lustful, sexually incontinent women alongside images of innocent virgins. According to Rana Kabbani, the *Arabian Nights* reaffirmed ‘ xenophobic biases’ and contained a style of portraying women prevalent in the ‘repressively patriarchal societies’ in which they originated. *Europe’s Myths of Orient*, p. 48. Fantasies of the harem after Galland bear the hallmarks of his influence. See Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London: Allen Lane, 1994); *The Arabian Nights in English Literature: Studies in the Reception of the Thousand and One Nights into British Culture*, ed. by Peter Caracciolo (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); Ros Ballaster, *Fabulous Orient: Fictions of the East in England 1662-1785* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005); *Fables of the East: Selected Tales 1662-1785*, ed. by Ros Ballaster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Felicity A. Nussbaum, ‘British Women Write the East after 1750: Revisiting a “Feminine’ Orient”,’ in *British Women’s Writing in the Long Eighteenth Century: Authorship, Politics and History*, ed. by Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 121-39 (p. 121) and *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context*, ed. by Felicity A. Nussbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); For the origins of the Arabian Nights see Suheir al-Qalamawi, *Alf Laila wa Laila* (Cairo, 1959); *The Arabian Nights: Based on the Text of the Fourteenth Century Syrian Manuscript*, ed. by Muhsin Mahdi, trans. by Hussain Haddawy (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990); *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments*, ed. by Robert L. Mack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). For details of writers who were influenced by the *Arabian Nights* see Irwin, *The Arabian Nights*; and Caracciolo, *The Arabian Nights in English Literature*.
Identifying women in the harem

The women in the Sultan’s seraglio or in the diverse harems written about by Western authors were predominantly Christian or pagan slaves captured from Europe, Asia and Africa who converted to Islam. As concubinage was a widely practised and standard feature of Muslim dynasties there was a continuous and voracious demand for women slaves throughout the Ottoman Empire. Paul Rycaut noted that

*Polygamie* is freely indulged to them by their Religion […] and every one may freely serve himself of his Women Slaves, with as much variety as he is able to buy or maintain; and this kind of Concubinage is no ways envied or condemned by the Wifes […] so long as they can enjoy their due maintenance, and have some reasonable share in the Husbands bed which once a week is their due by the Law; for if any of them hath been neglected the whole week before, she challenges Thursday night as her due.

Under Islamic law males were allowed sexual access to those whom their ‘right hand possesses of believing slave girls’, so any unmarried female slaves were potential concubines. After several years as a slave some women were manumitted as a meritorious act by their masters or, if a master wished to marry his female slave, he had first to free her. Lancelot Addison (1632-1703), who was chaplain of the English garrison at Tangier from 1663 to 1670, caustically noted the religious foundation for concubinage and polygamy amongst Muslims. He suggested that Muhammad made his Religion to contain many carnal indulgences, denying nothing to Believers of his Doctrine that had any sensible compliance with their brutal affections […] first he granted to every Professor of his Religion the liberty of marrying four wives; he likewise taught that they might take as many Concubines as they were able to maintain. […] As for Polygamy it is looked upon as a Divine Institution.

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33 See Peirce, p. 38. See also Murray Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World* (New York: New Amsterdam, 1989); Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). The Qur’an allows a Muslim man up to four legal wives and as many concubines as he desires. Only a small number of elites could afford to maintain an extensive harem, Yeazell, p. 2.
35 The Qur’an, Sūrah an-Nisa 4:25.
37 Ibid., p. 31.
38 Lancelot Addison, *West Barbary, Or, a Short Narrative of the Revolutions of the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco* (Oxford, 1671), pp. 189-90.
Bindu Malieckal explains that from the reign of Mehmed II (r. 1451-81) interdynastic marriages for Ottoman heirs were discouraged 'so that the political complications of showing favouritism toward any foreign or domestic power could be avoided'. In 1569 the captive Bartolomej Georgijevic noted this policy but, rather than seeing it as a political strategy, attributed it to licentiousness:

For, to avoyde equalitie in the Empire, they never maruye anye honest and lawfull wives, but in their places, satisfye their pleasures, and libidinous lustes (whereunto in moste vile & filthy maner, they are subjecte, as bove all other nations) they have ravished virgins frome all partes of the worlde, bewtifull and in favour the most excellent.

Georgijevic was commenting on the marriage of Suleyman I (1494-1566) to his favourite concubine, Roxolana (1504-58) who became his wife, Hurrem Sultan, and rose to a position of power in the Ottoman Empire. It is thought she was captured from the Polish Ukraine and presented as a gift to the sultan on his accession in September 1520. Georgijevic reported that in process of time Suleyman was ‘rauyshed aboue measure’ with her beauty and was consumed with ‘unbridled desire and lust of Rosa’. Suleyman breached tradition by marrying Hurrem, making her the first slave concubine in Ottoman history to be freed and made a legal wife. Georgijevic noted the peculiarity of the sultan’s action, saying it was ‘contrary to the usage and custome of the house of Ottomanno’. Tales of Roxolana’s beauty and her spectacular rise from slave to sultan were repeated in Western accounts up to the eighteenth century, with the name Roxana being equated with whores and brothels.

39 Malieckal, pp. 59-60. The marriage in 1435 of Murad II to Mara, the daughter of George Brankovich, the ruler of Serbia, was the final interdynastic marriage of an Ottoman sultan, after which the Ottoman dynasty did not contract legal marriages but instead perpetuated itself solely through slave concubinage. See Peirce, pp. 28-39.
40 Georgijevic, The Ofspring of the House of Ottomanno, J8r. Bon also noted the use of concubinage and the decline of marriage in the Imperial harem, pp. 40-45. Rycaut observed that ‘this disuse of Marriage in the Sultan, hath been a Maxime of State’, pp. 155-56. Both Bon and Rycaut contended that the real reason for the absence of marriage was that the revenue of the empire would be expended by bestowing riches on a wife.
41 She became known to Westerners as Roxolana or Roxelena, derived from the Polish ‘Ruthenian maiden’. See Roxolana in European Literature, History and Culture ed. by Galina Yermolenko (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).
42 In Polish tradition she is Aleksandra Lisowska from Rogatin. See Peirce, pp. 57-65.
43 Georgijevic, J5v.
44 Ibid., J7r.
46 Georgijevic, J8r.
47 Ballaster, Fabulous Orients, p. 61. In 1603 Richard Knolles wrote that Roxolana was ‘by condition a captive, but so graced with beautie and courtly behaviour, that in short time she became Mistresse of
Travellers reported on the ethnic composition and diversity of the women destined for the Grand Turk’s harem. The French soldier and diplomat, Nicolas de Nicolay (1517-1583), who travelled as royal geographer in the entourage of Ambassador d’Aramon in 1551-52, declared that most of the two hundred wives and concubines of the ‘great Turk’ were:

 daughters of Christians, some being taken by courses on the seas or by land, as well from Grecians, Hongarians, Wallachers, Mingreles, Italians as other Christian nations, some of the other are bought of merchants, and after wardes by Beglerbeis, Baschas \(^{48}\) and Captaines presented unto the great Turke who keepeth them within this Serail \(^{49}\) (Figure 9).

![Figure 9](image)

**Figure 9** A Gentlewoman of the Turks being within her house or Serail. Nicolas de Nicolay, *The Navigations, Peregrinations and Voyages, made into Turkie by Nicholas Nicholay*, trans. Thomas Washington (London, 1585)

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\(^{48}\) Mingrelians or Megrelians live in the Samegrelo region of Georgia. Wallachia is a historical and geographical region of Romania. Beglerbeg or beylerbeyi means ‘bey of beys’, a chieftain, lord or governor-general, in rank next to the grand vizier. Basha is the earlier form of Pasha, the highest official title of honour in the Ottoman Empire. See *OED*.

\(^{49}\) Nicolay, p. 53. Nicolay’s *Quatre premiers livres des navigations* was first published in 1568 in Lyon, with further editions in 1576 and 1586. It was translated into German (1576), English (1585), Dutch (1576), and Italian (1576). The sketches which Nicolay made on his travels were adapted by the artist Louis Daret into the sixty black and white engravings included in the *Navigations*. See Amanda Wunder, ‘Western Travelers, Eastern Antiquities, and the Image of the Turk in Early Modern Europe’, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 7 (2003), 89-119.
Michel Baudier (c.1589-1645), historiographer to Louis XIII, related how the Sultan’s emissaries sought out virgins in far flung outreaches, almost like a hunting expedition: ‘the Bashaes […] imploy all their care to find out Virgins in the Levant or else-where, the rarest in beautie, and of the sweetest perfections of their sex’.50 The women were sourced by whatever means available, with some being prisoners of war or sold into slavery by ‘the necessitie of miserable Mothers’ who ‘deliver them for money’.51 Writing in 1668, diplomat Paul Rycaut (1629-1700) confirmed the extent of the slaving excursions of the Ottomans as he described the ‘Assembly of fair women’ of the Grand Signior’s Seraglio who were commonly prizes of the Sword, taken at Sea and at Land, as far fetched as the Turk commands, or the wandring Tartar makes his excursions, composed almost of as many Nations as there are Countries of the world; none of which are esteemed worthy of this Preferment, unless beautiful and undoubted Virgins.52

The women of the seraglio had to be white, as the Ottomans equated whiteness with beauty. Blond, blue-eyed girls were most sought after.53 Ros Ballaster states that ‘the myth of the beautiful, sexually accomplished “Circassian” slave-concubine was a powerful and popular one in European writing about Ottoman court culture’.54 Travellers such as Bon and Baudier enthused about the many talents of these women whose numbers multiplied regularly:

Now, those which are shut up for their beauties, are all young virgins […] who after they have been instructed in good behaviour, and can play upon instruments, sing, dance and sew curiously; they are given to the Grand Signor as presents of great value and the number of these encreaseth daily.55

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51 Baudier, p. 50.
52 Rycaut, pp. 38-39. Tatars are a Turkic ethnic group in Eastern Europe and Northern Asia. They are a native people of the Volga region of Russia.
53 Malieckal, p. 62. She explains that for the Ottomans, whiteness ‘was the nonappearance of a black complexion and a requirement for true Turkish identity’. Writing from Alexandria in 1691 Jean Dumont described the men as ‘very Black’ but said that the Women ‘are not tann’d in the least with that colour, so careful are they to preserve their Complexions, and to keep themselves out of the reach of the sun’, A New Voyage to the Levant (London, 1696), p. 210. First published in French as Nouveau voyage du Levant (The Hague: Chez Etienne Folque, 1694).
54 Ballaster, Fabulous Orients, p. 72. Circassian women were from the North Caucasus, Russia.
55 Bon, p. 36.
The women were instructed in genteel behaviour and ‘having had a special care for the keeping of their Virginity’ they were presented to the Sultan.\textsuperscript{56} Lady Mary attempted to discredit male accounts of the type of women for sale in the markets of Istanbul. She claimed that those taken from Russia, Circassia or Georgia were miserable, awkward, poor wretches you would not think any of them worthy to be your housemaid […] Those that are exposed to sale at the markets are always either guilty of some crime or so entirely worthless that they are of no use at all […] you’ll doubt the truth of this account, which I own is very different from our common notions in England.\textsuperscript{57}

All of the occupants of the seraglio were slaves, each with their own place in the internal hierarchy, each subservient to the whims of their master. Captive women who originated in far-flung regions were immersed in the melting-pots of oriental harems, and in Western imagination became subsumed under the generic terms of ‘Turkish’ or ‘Moorish’ women.\textsuperscript{58} These women whether in Istanbul or in the cities of Barbary lost their national and Christian identities. In print they became immortalised as objects of sexual fantasy and speculation – doomed virgins, victims of infidel lust, or teasing temptresses with the power to corrupt and convert.

**The Seraglio as a sub-genre of travel accounts**

Despite the lack of visual verification, the seraglio was an almost obligatory, and expected, ‘set piece’ of any travel account, and one which would guarantee interest, and sales. Not having personally witnessed what they described, male travellers emphasised the trustworthiness or reliability of their informants. For their readers’ gratification authors endeavoured to elaborate and offer fresh fragments of information, each allegedly penetrating deeper than previous travellers and unlocking forbidden secrets. Indeed some, such as Baudier, went so far as to suggest that all the mysteries of the East were locked away in the seraglio:

> it would not be unprofitable to let you see what their manners are, their kind of living, their conversation and the order of their government […] To do safely we must enter into the Serrail, where the secret of all these things is carefully shut up.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{56} Baudier, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{57} Wortley Montagu, Vol. II, p. 131.
\textsuperscript{58} Malieckal, p. 58. When referring to Turkish women Malieckal uses quotation marks for the word “Turkish” as she explains: ‘slave women of the Ottoman harem were not ethnic Turks but Europeans, Central Asians, and Africans’.
\textsuperscript{59} Baudier, p. 2.
The travel editor Samuel Purchas (1577?-1626) claimed that Robert Withers’s account would make the reader ‘Master of the Grand Signiors Serraglio’, a sight previously prohibited ‘to Christian eyes’. Jean Chardin (1643-1713), a French jeweller and traveller who travelled to the East in the late seventeenth century, suggested that the ‘secret Habitations’ of the harem were ‘Regions of another World’. Rycaut readily admitted he was ‘unfamiliar’ with Turkish women and their living quarters, but nevertheless, undeterred by this discrepancy, promised to provide a detailed description:

And though I ingenuously confess my acquaintance there (as all other my conversation with Women in Turky) is but strange and unfamiliar; yet not to be guilty of this discourtesie, I shall to the best of my information write a short account of these Captivated Ladies.

He stressed that the women were confined and hence out of sight of male view, but claiming to have been able to catch a glimpse of these secreted ladies added an element of illicit interest to any travel account. Rycaut’s literary journey brings his readers into the eunuchs’ quarters. Having come this far and offered a hint of the forbidden, Rycaut was determined not to frustrate his reader who would be disappointed should he ‘leave him at the door, and not introduce him into those apartments, where the Grand Signiors Mistresses are lodged’. Authors set the scene of anticipation and expectation, surreptitiously arousing the enthusiasm of the reader, and ensuring, as Alloula points out, that the ‘lower depths of the libido [would] be stirred’. Purchas created an air of intensified expectation as he offered a hint of the forbidden: ‘But why doe I hold thee longer from the Author himself: yea from this promised Serraglio?’

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60 Samuel Purchas, Purchas his Pilgrimes in five books (London, 1625), vol. II, p. 1580.
62 Rycaut, p. 38.
63 Ibid. Rycaut outlined their function: ‘The Black Eunuchs are ordained for the service of the Women in the Seraglio, as the White are to the attendance of the Grand Signior, it not seeming a sufficient remedy by wholly dismembering them, to take the Women off from their inclinations to them, as retaining some relation still to the Masculine Sex, but to create an abhorrency in them; they are not only castrated, but Black, chosen with the worst features that are to be found among the most hard-favoured of that African race’, p. 22.
64 Rycaut, p. 22.
65 Alloula, p. 96.
‘Subterranean Grottos [...] Paths of Love and Labyrinths of Pleasure’ where lascivious ladies raised the ardour of an amorous sultan\(^{67}\) (Figure 10).

Denied access to these secret spaces where women met and conversed freely, Christian men fantasised about the lust and licentiousness which they imagined was rampant within the harem.\(^{68}\) While in Turkey in 1599 to install an organ, a present for Mehmed III from Elizabeth I, Thomas Dallam (\(bap.\ 1575, d.\ in or after 1630\)) managed to sneak a glance through a grill in a ‘verrie thicke’ wall ‘graited on bothe the sides with iron verrie strongly’ and claims to encounter ‘thirtie of the Grand Sinyor’s Concobines that weare playing with a bale’[ball].\(^{69}\) Dallam’s depiction of the thick walls and strong railings reinforces Western perception of the bondage and the lack of freedom of Ottoman women.\(^{70}\) As Dallam gazed, he enthused that the

\(^{67}\) Hill, A Full and Just Account, preface, xxiv; pp. 147-63.


\(^{69}\) Bent, p. 74. Mehmed III (1566-1603) was the son of Amurath III and Safiye Sultan.

\(^{70}\) Nicolay emphasised the strong fortifications of the ‘olde Serrail’ which: ‘containeth 2000. Paces in circuit, inclosed with high walles of fifteene cubits, and of thicknesse accordingly, without any
women were ‘veerie prettie ones indeede’, as if they were curious specimens on display for his pleasure.\textsuperscript{71} From his discrete vantage point Dallam was close enough to discern ‘the skin of their thies’ through their muslin clothing and ‘stood so longe loukinge upon them’ that he angered his ‘jemeglan’ guide.\textsuperscript{72} The enthralled Dallam grudgingly admit that he had to avert his gaze ‘the which I was very lothe to dow’ but added suggestively that the ‘sighte did please me wonderous well’.\textsuperscript{73}

Over a century later, John Windus, who accompanied Commodore Charles Stewart to Morocco in 1720, spent four months gathering material for his travel account. In his preface, Windus stated that he had been particularly careful not to describe anything but what he had personally witnessed or was supported by reliable witnesses or sources.\textsuperscript{74} He confirmed the inaccessibility and invisibility of Moroccan women and suggested that a man could live for a year in Tetuan ‘and not see the Face of a Moorish Woman in the Streets’.\textsuperscript{75} However, he enhanced his account by provocatively suggesting that if they encountered women in the fields, or saw them on the house-tops, ‘if none of the Moors were in sight, they would unveil, laugh, and give themselves a little loose’.\textsuperscript{76} He implied that without the constant supervision of the Moors these women would act flirtatiously with male passers-by. Windus described the women as having ‘fine Eyes, and some of them beautiful Skins’.\textsuperscript{77} Windus’s account calls to mind Nicolay’s depiction of the ‘Moorishe women and mayden slaves’ of Algiers ‘who doe goe too washe theyr lynnen, being commonly whole naked, saving that they weare a peece of cotton cloath of some strange colour to cover their secret partes, (which notwithstanding for a little peece of money they will willinglie uncover)’\textsuperscript{78} (Figure 11). Foreign women are formulated as novel spectacles and objects for voyeuristic consumption.

towres: it hath onely two gates, whereof the one commonly standeth open, being well guarded by Eunuches and the other almost never opened’, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{71} Bent, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., p. 75. Bent explains that jemeglans were ‘adjemoglans’ or ‘sons of strangers’. They were ‘either captives in war, or sons of Christian parents taken when young and designed for the more servile offices of the seraglio which a Turk would not do’, p. 62 note 1.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Windus, Preface.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., p. 31. Tetuan is a city in northern Morocco a few miles south of the Strait of Gibraltar.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., p. 31.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Nicolay, p. 8.
Undeterred by the women’s inaccessibility, Christian males luxuriated in fabulous invention. They created surreal, larger-than-life images with inordinate sexual appetites, devious desires and all-consuming passion. Literary constructions, while evocative and suggestive, warn of foreign temptation and highlight the vulnerability of the unsuspecting Christian male to alluring Ottoman women and the overtly seductive world of Islam. In Philip Massinger’s play, *The Renegado* (1624), Francisco warns the vulnerable Vitelli about the temptation posed by Turkish women:

You are young
And may be tempted, and these Turkish dames
(Like English mastiffs that increase their fierceness
By being chained up), from the restraint of freedom,
If lust once fire their blood from a fair object,
Will run a course the fiends themselves would shake at
To enjoy their wanton ends.79

Massinger employs the usual stereotypes of incarcerated, libidinous women and the defenceless Christian male to arouse his audience’s interest. Audiences became accustomed to reading and accepting accounts such as these, which suggested that Ottoman women were, as Rycaut put it, ‘the most lascivious and immodest of all Women, and excel in the most refined and ingenious subtlties to steal their pleasures’.  

Thomas Dallam was told that if he would stay in Turkey ‘the Grand Sinyor would give tow wyfes either tow of his Concubines or else tow virgins of the beste I could chuse my selfe in Cittie or contrie’. Dallam chose to return to England, but for many the temptations offered were often not so easy to resist.

‘Turkish’ women in captives’ accounts
Desire between Christians and Muslims in exotic eastern settings was a longstanding topic, as we see in medieval epic poetry and prose, and its literary origins can be traced to the chanson de gestes. These heroic epics, which glorified the exploits of Charlemagne against the Moors of Spain, date from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. They originated in France and spread throughout Europe. In later medieval England, Romances related the adventures of chivalrous Christian heroes and exotic Saracen princesses. After defeating Saracen armies and slaying grotesque giants, the epic adventure usually ends with the beautiful pagan princess being baptized in order to become the wife of the Christian knight with whom she has fallen in love. These tales emphasized the triumph of Christianity over Islam. The Romance of Sir Bevis of Hampton (translated from the Anglo-Norman c. 1300) was hugely popular in the medieval and early modern periods. It tells the story of Bevis, a Christian who is sold into slavery in pagan Egypt. Josian, the besotted Saracen princess, falls in love with him. She is a paragon of beauty, lusty but restrained, and willing to be baptized and to forsake her religion to marry her Christian hero. The Christian knight virtuously refuses her amorous advances and remains unsullied until the pagan princess is baptised. The Romance of Floris and Blanchefleur c. 1250 is the

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80 Rycaut, p. 153.
81 Bent, p. 73.
82 Song of Deeds. The most famous of these is the Chanson de Roland. In these poems Saracen kings invade Christendom but are defeated by gallant knights. Repeated attempts are made to convert the inferior infidel to the superior faith of the triumphant Christian knights. See Carol Falvo Heffernan, The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance (Cambridge: D.S Brewer, 2003).
83 See www.middleenglishromance.org.uk.
84 Kabbani, p. 15.
second oldest surviving romance in English and it contains all the marvels of the East – luscious gardens, eunuchs, an emir and chaste maidens. Floris, a Saracen boy, falls in love with Blanchefleur, a Christian girl with whom he was raised. To prevent them marrying she is sold into slavery. The story contains one of the earliest representations of a harem. The emir’s women are concealed in an impenetrable tower a hundred fathoms high made of limestone and marble, guarded by eunuchs. The emir selects his virgins in a walled orchard with an enchanted stream which can reveal if a maiden is chaste. In the majority of these stories the pagan princess renounces Islam and is baptised a Christian. Kabbani points out that while the Muslim princess is portrayed as deceitful, lustful and self-serving, the Christian heroine of the Romances is virtuous and honourable. These fables of Eastern luxuriousness, cross-cultural romance and overt sexuality fuelled the Western imagination and were repeated, adapted and rejuvenated.

Whereas travellers had to rely on third-party informants or a fertile imagination for their accounts of Ottoman women, male captives claimed to have privileged access to the women’s quarters. Standard tropes in captivity narratives range from proclaiming staunch resistance to conversion, despite persistent temptation; indulging in forbidden pleasures with the beautiful wives of depraved old husbands; to actually falling in love with beautiful Muslim women, and if possible, converting them to Christianity. Captives contended that their close domestic confinement provided ample opportunities to supply intimate and detailed eye-witness accounts.

The French captive, Germain Moüette (1652- c. 1691), who was captured at sea on 16 October 1670, and sold at Salé on All Saints Day for the sum of 360 crowns, described the freedom supposedly accorded to Christian captives, who

> after Leave once given them are free to go into all Parts of their Masters Houses, the Law of the Country being no way against it. The greatest Men do not disallow of it, and should their Wives, or Daughters happen to be in any indecent Posture, when they come in, they would not offer to hide themselves; alleging, that the Eyes of our Bodies are blind, as well as those of our Souls, and therefore it signifies not much if we see them in any Posture.

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85 William Lister Comfort cites *Li Bastars de Buillon* and *Huon de Bordeaux* as two examples where the lovers are overcome with passion and do not wait for conversion or marriage. ‘The Literary Role of the Saracens in the French Epic’, *PMLA*, 55 (1940), 628-59 (p. 658).
86 Kabbani, p. 16.
87 Moüette, *The Travels of the Sieur Moüette*, p. 10. Also published as part of Vol. 2 of *A new collection of voyages and travels* (London, 1711) compiled by John Stevens. Moüette was freed in
Captives used their predicament to claim authority for their narratives. Moïette’s assertion that Christian slaves were considered blind and allowed access to the women’s quarters contradicts writers such as Rycaut who described the extreme measures that were taken to insure that any hint of a male presence was removed from the proximity of the harem. In Morocco Thomas Pellow outlined his precarious position as chief porter to the queen and thirty-eight of the Emperor’s concubines:

I was oblig’d to walk like one walking on the Brink of a dangerous Precipice [...] The Queen in short being extremely amorous [...] which really made my Condition very dangerous, and might, through some unforeseen Accident (let my Behaviour be never so innocent) happen to prove of very bad Consequence to me, therefore I thought it highly prudent to keep a very strict Guard upon all my Actions.  

This was a job usually preserved for the black eunuchs but Pellow, despite his young age, suggested he was in close contact with the passionate Queen and was the innocent victim of her advances. Joseph Pitts claimed to have known of slaves in Algiers who were beaten and sold for not complying with the ‘lascivious desires’ of their mistresses. The 1731 edition of his narrative adds the further claim that Pitts’s second master’s wife was unfaithful and ‘many a Temptation did she lay in [his] way, though not by word of mouth but by Signals’ but he made himself ‘ignorant of her meaning and so escaped the Snare’. Muslim mistresses are consistently portrayed as cunning instigators waiting to trap gullible Christians into sexual liaisons and conversion. The anonymous author of A Description of the Nature of Slavery among the Moors (1721) described his work in his master’s gardens as a ‘lucky Appointment’ as it was a favourite place for women to stroll ‘unseen and in private’. In the late seventeenth century the English captive, Mr. T. S., claimed to have worked as a cook and in the King’s baths where he frequently came into contact with women. However, while male captives may have had more opportunity to come into contact with harem women, their accounts varied in

1681 and published an account of his captivity as Relation de la captivité du Sr. Moüette (1683). Emanuel d’Aranda had also suggested that Christians were considered blind: ‘When they are home, they are not so shy of the Christian slaves; for they say the Christians are blind’, The History of Algiers, p. 151.
89 Joseph Pitts, A True and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mohammetans (Exeter, 1704) p. 47.
91 A Description of the Nature of Slavery, p. 7.
92 The Adventures of (Mr. T. S.), p 34.
authenticity, were exaggerated and contained the same sort of misinformation and fantasy as travellers’ accounts.

Peter Wilson notes that many captivity narratives are ‘pregnant with an unspoken yearning, quite erotic in tone, to embrace the enemy of all Christendom’. 93 In these texts there is an ‘aura of seduction’ 94 presented in the form of sexual promise, riches and prestige which could seem very attractive in comparison to a life of poverty and anonymity, or the sexual repression and moral strictness of Christianity. In the late sixteenth century Richard Hasleton, from Braintree in Essex, was a captive of both the Inquisition and of the ‘Kabyles’ in Algiers. 95 At the hands of the Spanish he was severely tortured to get him to convert, but he suggested that the Moors used subtler tactics. Hasleton described the many temptations offered to him to make him convert ‘from a Christian to be an abominable idolater’. 96 His master threatened that Hasleton would die in captivity if he did not ‘turn Moor’. The king enticed him with money, a house and land if he would serve him and convert. He was offered the choice of any woman in the court to be his wife (Figure 12). When all of these inducements failed to tempt him, the queen was sent to negotiate with him and she

entreated me to turn and serve the king […]. And many times she would show me her gentlewomen and ask me if none of them could please me, but I told her I had a wife in mine own country, to whom I had vowed my faith before God. 97

93 Wilson, p. 177.  
94 Ibid.  
96 Hasleton, Strange and Wonderful Things, p. 15.  
97 Ibid.
Hasleton related that everyone was astounded that he should ‘refuse such offers of preferment’ and the queen ‘could only but marvaile what she should be whome I esteemed so much’.\(^98\) Despite the temptations laid before him, he remained steadfast in his faith due to his desire for salvation and the ‘love and dutiful allegiance’ which he owed to his prince and country, and he remained faithful to the vows he made in matrimony.\(^99\) Hasleton’s wife, Agnes, collected alms for his relief at St. Botolph, Aldgate, in July 1592. An entry in Harridance’s daybook in the Guildhall Library, London, suggests Hasleton was ‘the worse used because he will not forsake his faythe in Chryst and can not be redeemed from thence but by paying the sum of one hondered powndes for his raunsom’.\(^100\) Hasleton eventually escaped and ‘with the help of an honest merchant’ returned to England in February 1593. His narrative, printed in 1595, avers that he resisted the many temptations offered to him and remained faithful to wife, country and religion. For those who returned home and wrote about their captivity in Muslim territory it was essential to clarify and reiterate how they had resisted temptation and foreign contamination.

Moüette explained how his handsome mistress offered him mouth-watering titbits, seasonal fruits and an attractive, wealthy niece to seduce him into converting:

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\(^98\) Hasleton, p. 15.
\(^99\) Ibid.
My Mistress, who was young, and very handsome, and spoke excellent Spanish, […] treated me with white Bread, Butter mixt with Hony, and such Fruit as was in Season; caus’d a Chain of twenty five Pound Weight her Husband had put on me to be taken off, conjur’d me to be patient under my Captivity, saved me from her husband’s beating and reproaches, and often pressed me to turn Renegado, that she might have it in her Power to give me greater Tokens of her Affection, by marrying me to a very beautiful and rich Niece she had.\(^{101}\)

Moüette managed to resist his mistress’s temptations but succinctly conveys for the reader the many and varied enticements that were presented to Christian captives to lead them astray. He tells of another French man from Normandy, aptly called the ‘Sieur de la Place’,\(^{102}\) who was held captive in Salé. He was a proficient musician and was often summoned to his Master’s wife’s room to play the lute. She treated him with ‘Dates, Raisins of the Sun, Honey and white Bread’, and to enhance his appearance she gave him money for linen and ‘perswaded her Husband to give him a Suit of Scarlet, with a green Silk Girdle’.\(^{103}\) Not only had this captive been invited into the women’s quarters and befriended his master’s wife, but he was also wearing his master’s luxurious clothes. Another woman who was ‘charm’d’ with his voice offered him the opportunity of ‘being as familiar together as they pleas’d’ and afforded him ‘all the Favour she could’.\(^{104}\) The Sieur de la Place then spent fourteen months with three beautiful ladies who had heard of his musical accomplishments:

Those Ladies going every Friday into the publick Baths of the City, to divert themselves there, with the other Women, that they might have the more Sport, they took along with them the Sieur de la Place, disguis’d in Woman’s Apparel, who whilst they went alone into a separate Bath, remain’d among the other Women, that bath’d stark Naked before him whilst he play’d on the Guitarr, expecting the Return of his Mistresses. If any thing more particular happen’d in this Recreation, it never came to my Knowledge.\(^{105}\)

Readers were familiar with reading accounts of the baths, such as that by George Sandys (1578-1644), which suggested that ‘much unnatural and filthy lust is said to be committed daily in the remote closets of the darksome baths’.\(^{106}\) In Moüette’s account the Christian male, disguised as a Turkish woman, penetrates an exclusively

\(^{101}\) Moüette, p. 10.
\(^{102}\) Ibid., p. 66.
\(^{103}\) Ibid., p. 67.
\(^{104}\) Ibid., p. 67.
\(^{105}\) Ibid., p. 70-71. The theme of a male smuggled into the harem appears as early as ‘The Reeves Tale’ in the Arabian Nights. See Yeazell, p. 144.
\(^{106}\) Sandys, A Relation of a Journey begun an: Dom: 1610, p. 69.
female space, the baths. He is fully clothed while around him women bathe and converse ‘stark naked before him’, supposedly oblivious that they are being observed by a male interloper.\textsuperscript{107} He takes advantage of the anonymity and limitless possibilities offered by the concealing nature of female attire but, as the only ‘woman’ clothed would surely have raised some curiosity.\textsuperscript{108} Remaining singularly clothed he observed the communal nudity all around him but managed to preserve distance by playing nonchalantly on his instrument. Seeing without being seen he basks in the knowledge that he is blameless in this subterfuge as it is the women that want him there ‘for Sport’. After presenting this highly-charged voyeuristic episode Moüette does not disclose whether the imposter doffs his female clothing to indulge in orgiastic pleasures, but leaves the reader to imagine what may have ‘happen’d in this Recreation’. Moüette recounted that the musician considered himself ‘happy in being a Slave, since it enabled him to do Service to the most beautiful Ladies in Morocco’\textsuperscript{109}. Despite all the temptations offered, the musician did not convert. He relayed in a letter that ‘all his Comrades had renounc’d their Faith; but for his Part, he was resolv’d to do Penance, and persevere in Christianity’\textsuperscript{110}.

One of the most outspoken narratives about sexual adventures was the historically based fictive account of the English captive Mr. T. S. This picaresque narrative ‘fitted for the Publick view’ by A. Roberts, supposedly after the death of the author, was published in 1670 as a ‘well humoured Romance’ with useful observations and pleasant adventures.\textsuperscript{111} It was received as genuine and contained many factual details about Algeria.\textsuperscript{112} The bawdy elements of this account would have been popular with Restoration readers while the literary direction of the narrative points to the emergence of the early English novel.\textsuperscript{113} Mr. T. S. recounts his

\textsuperscript{107} Readers would have been aware that disguises and masquerade afforded an anonymity that allowed sexual promiscuity as well as defying social and class hierarchies, Lowe, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{108} When Lady Mary visited the Turkish baths in the early eighteenth century as a fully clothed Western woman she became a spectacle amongst the naked women. Remarkably, the liberating and concealing nature of Muslim women’s clothing which she considered a ‘perpetual Masquerade’, she asserted ‘tis impossible for the most jealous Husband to know his Wife when he meets her’. She contended that fidelity was negligible: ‘You may easily imagine the number of faithfull Wives very small’, Vol. II, pp. 33-35.
\textsuperscript{109} Moüette, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., p. 67. He suggests his life as a Christian slave was preferable to converting as his ‘penance’ was attending to the needs of beautiful Moroccan women.
\textsuperscript{111} The Adventures of (Mr. T. S.), A2v.
\textsuperscript{112} There were numerous editions up until the late eighteenth century.
\textsuperscript{113} See MacLean, The Rise of Oriental Travel, pp. 179-82. After extensive research MacLean has concluded that the identity of Mr. T. S. cannot be authoritatively established. In Caught Between Worlds: British Captivity Narratives in Fact and Fiction (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press,
many sexual adventures but also manages to resist the temptation to convert. He presents himself as a desirable stallion and suggests that his physical attributes and ‘inclinations’ were noticed by the King who advised his new master ‘not to trust [him] too much with his Women’. Mr. T. S. claims to have been immensely happy as a captive as ‘nothing was wanting unto [him] useful to the Life of Man’. According to himself, women found him irresistible and he boasts that news of his physical endowments and notoriety quickly spread:

When a Man is got into the esteem of Women, his Fame rests not in one or two Breasts, but speaks as loud, and with as many tongues as these prating Creatures.

Indeed, the unfortunate Mr. T. S. tells the reader that his handsome features, which warranted so much female attention, became quite a burden to him in the ‘Empire of Love’:

I was once so troubled with addresses, that I wished my Face had been disfigured, my stature more contemptible, and that all the promising Characters of my person had never appeared in me.

Despite his troubles Mr. T. S. takes advantage of his slavery and indulges in a variety of sexual dalliances without having to compromise his religious integrity. He admits that converting would have been advantageous but apostasy ‘was too big a Morsel for my Conscience to swallow’. He recounts how he resisted a handsome, rich widow who promised him her Estate if he would convert and marry her:

My first Resolution was to despise all these Offers and to prefer the Life of a Slave with Honour, and my Religion before the greatest Riches and the most pleasant Life […] All my Masters persuasions could not shake me from it, when I considered within my self such an action, to deny my Saviour that redeemed me, to despise his Bloud, to renounce all interest in him, to abjure his Truth, that I knew to be such, and own an Imposter (Mahomet); to prefer him and his Diabolical Religion before that which Christ hath established this action appeared unto me with such an horrid Aspect that I was frighted from

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2000) Joe Snader suggests T. S[mith]; In the bibliography to Piracy, Slavery and Redemption (2001) Daniel J. Vitkus cites Mr. T. S. as S[mith], T[homas].
114 The Adventures of (Mr. T. S.), pp. 27-28. This contradicts Moi`ette’s later contention that the Turks allowed their captives freedom of movement in the women’s quarters or considered their women to be safe with their captives.
115 Ibid., p. 34.
116 Ibid., p. 214.
117 Ibid., p. 223.
118 Ibid., p. 214.
the very thoughts of it; All the Advantages proposed to me, the vast Riches & Revenues could make no Impression upon my spirit.¹¹⁹

Mr. T. S. conveys how conversion to Islam could appear evocative to disheartened captives. With Christian fortitude this virile Englishman staunchly defended his faith and rejected all the enticements offered.

In captivity narratives, seducing, or being seduced by Muslim women and cuckolding their wealthy or high-ranking husbands could be justified as revenge against the ills of a depraved and sordid society.¹²⁰ Better still if the infidel maiden could be convinced to convert to Christianity. Mr. T. S. who successfully resisted conversion himself, endeavoured to convert his paramour, telling her of the happiness of a Christian life in England.¹²¹ She later died of poisoning but Mr. T. S. proudly informed his readers that, six months prior to her death, she gave birth to a daughter ‘somewhat whiter than ordinary’.¹²² Smug in the knowledge of his illicit conquest, he jeered that: ‘the old Fool thought himself to be the Father of it’.¹²³

Relating romantic entanglements added an extra dimension to captives’ narratives.¹²⁴ To divert his readers after the dismal details of the suffering of the captives in Barbary, Moüette recounted an anecdote entitled ‘In Love’, and tells of a French captive who fell for the charms of a Widow’s beautiful daughter who advised him to renounce his faith to enable him to marry her. Playing along with her and yet ‘never flatly denying’, she allowed him ‘some private Liberties […] to make much of her […] and to hold my Mouth to hers a considerable time’.¹²⁵ Without denying his faith this captive allegedly managed to indulge in some romance.¹²⁶

The anonymous author of A Description of the Nature of Slavery among the Moors (1721) included a dreamy interlude in his narrative by depicting a romantic encounter with his master’s beautiful, Portuguese wife, Moriama.¹²⁷ Assigned to work in a garden adjoining his master’s seraglio, this Englishman hears the ‘sweetest

¹¹⁹ The Adventures of (Mr. T.S), pp. 215-16.
¹²⁰ Bekkaoui, White Women Captives, p. 34.
¹²¹ The Adventures of (Mr. T. S.), p. 56.
¹²² Ibid., p. 57.
¹²³ Ibid.
¹²⁴ In Don Quixote (1605-15) Miguel de Cervantes includes a story of a romance between the slave Viedma and Zoraida, daughter of a rich Algerian.
¹²⁵ Moüette, pp. 56-7.
¹²⁶ Ibid.
¹²⁷ Anon., A Description, pp. 7-11.
Voice that ever ravish’d an Ear’. Despite being unable to understand the language of her song he deduced from its tone that she was unhappy with her confinement. A beautiful ‘angelick form’ exposed herself to him invitingly and raised his hopes ‘of some lucky Events that might follow’. Later that night, unable to sleep, he was overcome with desire and could think of nothing else:

The Vision I had seen was still present to my Eye, and drove away Sleep from the Lids of it: The Night was spent in Conjectures; and I had too much Youth, and Flesh and Blood on my Side, not to be wholly taken up with the delightful Ideas of so adorable an Object.

Wasting no time, the object of his desire offers herself to him:

You may think me forward and bold, said she, Englishman; but ’tis the Custom of this Country not to be long in telling their Mind. To be as brief as possible, I have taken a Liking to your Person; and if you are not indifferent to mine, it’s at your Disposal; and since it’s impossible to escape from the Servitude we are under, we have nothing to do, but to make it as easy as it can be to us, by frequent Opportunities of this Kind.

As time was of the essence the Englishman quickly made use of it ‘to the best Advantage, which gave [him] entire Possession of the loveliest Creature under the Sun’. They continued with their illicit assignations until Moraima is sent away and the Englishman is bereft at never being able to see her again. The author presents this brief but passionate encounter with the turbaned, Portuguese captive as a romance rather than an attempt at conversion.

Stories of cross-cultural romance were adapted from medieval and oriental precursors and provided cautionary tales as well as licit eroticism. They helped explore topics such as inter-racial desire, polygamy and female sexuality and helped shape values, opinions and policies. Western feelings about oriental women ranged from fascination and desire to disgust and disdain. The woman of the harem was a literary formation that ‘fulfilled the longings of Western imagination’. She was also a frightening emblem of the seductive threat of Islam.

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128 Anon. *A Description*, p. 8.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid., p. 9.
131 Ibid., p. 10.
132 Ibid.
135 Ibid., p. 22.
Female captives in male accounts

Due to the scarcity of Barbary captivity narratives written by women, accounts of Christian women’s captivity usually have to be unearthed from male-authored accounts. While the plight of women in captivity does receive some attention from male authors, often the accounts of the enslavement and sexual degradation of such women are inserted to add titillation and stimulation to their narratives or as a stark warning to Christian women about the sanctity of chastity and the sacredness of their faith. To a large extent, female identity was filtered and construed through male accounts rather than being affirmed or defended by women’s own voices. As there were longstanding suspicions directed at travellers in general, captives claimed to present accurate accounts, introducing their narratives with titles such as ‘a plain relation’, ‘a history’ or ‘a true and faithful account’, which readers presumably read as reliable, first-hand accounts. Behind these claims to veracity the line between fact and fiction was often distorted. Captive women found themselves in the position of being unable to defend themselves, either in person against the horrors of captivity or on paper in male-authored texts. Their experience rendered them silent victims of male proclivity in captivity and objects to be voyeuristically consumed by a curious readership at home. This body of literature reveals how the experiences of women captives were imagined and disseminated.

Female traffic

In male accounts, Christian women captives are initially encountered as items of commerce and trade, destined for sale to the highest bidder. The assorted types of merchandise that might be off-loaded at an Ottoman port in the early modern period included ‘Raw and salted fishe’, ‘Barbary horses’, ‘Corrall’ and ‘Christn Captives of all kindes’. From the ports, these commodities and human cargo were dispersed to the souks and marketplaces of the Ottoman Empire. Travellers and captives consistently described the harrowing conditions of the slave markets and routinely reported sightings of Christian women amongst those being sold. According to Bon:

136 The first female Barbary captivity narrative Elizabeth Marsh’s The Female Captive (1769) is discussed in chapter five.
137 A central trope in many male accounts was the sexual violation and coersion of female captives. Linda Colley argues that prior to 1750, British Barbary captivity ‘emphasized the sexual threat to male captives supposedly represented by North African and Muslim men’, Colley, ‘The Narrative of Elizabeth, pp.138-50 ( p. 144). I have discussed this topic in chapter three.
138 Degenhardt, p. 43. Degenhardt’s list is taken from ‘Notes concerning Trade Collected by Robert Williams, 1631-54’ (University of Pennsylvania, MS Codex 207).
Great Ey’d Ladies

In Constantinople neer the Bezisten\(^{139}\) where every Wednesday (in the open street) there are bought and sold slaves of all sorts and every one may freely come to buy for their several uses, some for nurses, some for servants and some for their lustful appetites. For they which make use of their slaves for their sensuality, cannot be punished by the Justice, as they should be, if they were taken with free women, and with Turkish women especially.\(^{140}\)

The women were divided into separate lots according to their uses. Children were regularly separated from their parents by unscrupulous traders, as Bon illustrates:

Buying sometimes the mother with the children, and sometimes the children without the mother, sometimes two or three brothers together, and again, sometimes taking the one, and leaving the rest, using no terms of humanity, love, or honesty, but even as the buyer, or the seller shall think will best turn them to profit.\(^{141}\)

Trading in slaves was a lucrative business. In the late sixteenth century in Istanbul, Nicolay saw a young maiden sold for ‘foure and thirtie ducats’.\(^{142}\) Thomas Smith (1638-1710), chaplain to the English ambassador, Sir Daniel Harvey, in Istanbul, suggested that ‘no commodity is more vendible or merchantable’.\(^{143}\) He observed the plight of ‘poor Children, scarce yet sensible for their misfortune, modest and silent’ and he vilified Jews there for their entrepreneurial cunning and greed:

They buy little Girls of five or six years of age at the rate or thirty or forty Dollars, and are mighty careful in their education; teaching them to dance and sing, and instructing them in all the sorts of a winning behaviour […] their accomplishments rendering them valuable at twenty times more than what they cost.\(^{144}\)

\(^{139}\) The bedesten (or bedestan from the Persian word bezestan) meaning ‘cloth market’ was a covered market where clothing, jewellery, weaponry and miscellaneous items were sold. The bedesten was one of the most frequented spots in Istanbul.

\(^{140}\) Bon, p. 162.

\(^{141}\) Ibid., p. 153.

\(^{142}\) Nicolay, p. 41. The Venetian ducat became the main European coin in the Levant around 1350. By the middle of the fifteenth century it was the leading form of payment throughout most of Europe and the Levant in long distance trade. The Ottomans began to produce Venetian ducats in their own mints sometime after the conquest of Istanbul. See Sevket Pamuk, A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 60-61.

\(^{143}\) Smith, Remarks, p. 143. Smith lived and worked in Istanbul from 1668-1671. His passion for oriental studies earned him the sobriquet Rabbi Smith. He enjoyed a productive career as an historian, an orientalist, a librarian and antiquary. As a preacher of the Restoration Church he published sermons and theological discourses. See ODNB.

Lady Mary, awed by the beautiful seven-year-old slave girls of Sultana Hafise in eighteenth-century Istanbul stated that: ‘there is not a handsome girl of that age to be bought under £100 sterling’.\(^{145}\)

Smith observed that although the Turks were confined to a set number of wives they ‘may heap up as many [women-slaves] as their lust and their estate’ allowed and could dispose of them when weary of them.\(^{146}\) According to Smith it was not unusual for a ‘poor miserable Christian woman to be sold five or six times’.\(^{147}\) Recounting ‘a charitable deed, done for a sinfull end’, the Scots traveller William Lithgow (1582- d. in or after 1645) outlined the fate of one such woman. In Istanbul, in the early seventeenth century, Lithgow became acquainted with a French Master Gunner, Monsieur Nerack, who ‘for conscience and merits sake’ decided to redeem a Christian captive from the bedesten:

We spent two houres in viewing and reviewing five hundred Males and Females. At last I pointed him to have bought an old man or woman, but his minde was contrary set, shewing me that he would buy some virgin, or young widow, to save their bodies undefloured with Infidels. The price of a virgin was too deare for him, being a hundred Duckets, and widows were farre under, and at an easier rate: When wee did visit and search them that wee were mindfull to buy, they were strip’d stark naked before our eyes, where the sweetest face, the youngest age, and whitest skin was in greatest value and request.\(^{148}\)

The sixty-year-old gunner bought a ‘Dalmatian widow’ for ‘36 Duckets’ and took her to a chamber where, instead of receiving compassion, she fell victim to his ‘luxurious lust’. She told Lithgow the next morning ‘all the manner of his usage, wishing her selfe to be again in her former captivity’. Ultimately, Lithgow secured her freedom six days later when the ship left port, adding ‘This French Gunner was a Papist and here you may behold the dregs of his devotion, and what seven nights leachery cost him, you may cast up the rekoning of 36 Duckets’.\(^{149}\) The anecdote suggests that women could be bought by anyone who had sufficient money, and then subjected to the whims and inclinations of the purchaser. Lithgow, who was

\(^{145}\) The Turkish Embassy Letters, p. 117.
\(^{146}\) Smith, Remarks, pp. 148–49.
\(^{147}\) Ibid., p. 149.
\(^{148}\) Lithgow, The Tottall Discourse, p. 137.
\(^{149}\) Ibid., p. 138.
resolutely anti-Catholic, stressed that the man was a French Papist, insinuating that Catholic morals were no better than those of the Turks.\footnote{150}

Women from impoverished backgrounds were usually abandoned in slavery and Linda Colley determines that female captives were more likely than men to be retained for life or other services.\footnote{151} Matar agrees that the chance for women to escape Barbary captivity was ‘nearly nil’\footnote{152} In an early account of Turkish manners and customs, Bartolomej Georgijevic outlined a bleak future of ‘perpetuall labours’ for slave women:

Such are endewed with excellent bewtye, they chuse to be Concubines, the meaner sorte are given to ryche Dames and matrones, for wayting mades, to use them about their necessarrye business, amonge the whiche, certain ar such uncleanlye offices, that with honesty they may not be named; for the mades ar compelled to follow them, with a vessel of water, when they goe fourth to lay downe the burthen of nature,\footnote{153} and purge their inferiour partes.\footnote{154}

Smith, writing about Istanbul in the late seventeenth century, confirmed that there was no possibility of escape for captive women and that they were ‘forced to keep at home, and only divert themselves by looking through a lattice of an upper Chamber’.\footnote{155} Georgijevic bemoaned the likely fate of captive women: ‘It is lawful for none of them all, eyther to persiste in the Christian religion, or conceive anye hope of fredome, as longe as they live’.\footnote{156} With no prospects of repatriation, resistance – both physical and spiritual – could be worn down in time, culminating in a loss of Christian identity.


\footnote{151} Colley, \textit{The Ordeal}, p. 78.

\footnote{152} Matar, \textit{Britain and Barbary 1589-1689}, p. 96.

\footnote{153} See \textit{OED}, s.v. ‘Excrement’; chiefly in ‘to do one’s nature’ and ‘the burden of nature’.

\footnote{154} Georgijevic, G7v. Baudier described a similar destiny for slave women after they left the marketplace. If the women are beautiful they are sold at a high price to ‘serve the passions’ of their masters and: ‘They to whom Nature hath denied such graces, are taken to empty the close-stooles of great Turkish Ladies, and to wash with water the parts of their body, which serve to discharge their bellies’, p. 11. A close-stool was ‘a chamber utensil enclosed in a stool or box’, see \textit{OED}. Bon noted ‘No closestools among the men; but the women ever when they go to the Haman or Bath, carry them along with them. No paper used at the privy’, p. 130.

\footnote{155} Smith, p. 150.

\footnote{156} Georgijevic, G7v.
Female chastity and virtue
The patriarchal structure of early modern society ensured that there was considerable anxiety, if not obsession, surrounding female chastity and virtue.¹⁵⁷ For a woman, ‘the possession of biological virginity’ positions her ‘on one side or another of a flexible, invisible, but highly structured and vastly fraught boundary that determines her relationship to a man/men within her society’.¹⁵⁸ Kathleen Coyne Kelly states that virginity is often envisaged as ‘wholeness, intactness, perfection’ and the virgin is seen as a ‘conduit to the divine and/or an earthly prize to be won or bestowed’.¹⁵⁹ The virginal woman became idealized due to masculine fear of female sexuality.¹⁶⁰ This fear was exaggerated when applied to Christian women in non-Christian territory and is an omnipresent trope in travel accounts and captivity narratives. Women’s bodies could be impregnated by unfamiliar foreigners, thus diluting national purity, confusing identity and destroying notions of civility. By violating women’s bodies the infidel could gain access to women’s souls and pose a threat to the Christian faith.

Georgijevic entitled a section of his narrative: ‘How they deal with virgins and other women’.¹⁶¹ Unlike male captives, he reported that women were divided into two distinct categories, ‘virgins and other’, highlighting the particularly sexual emphasis of captivity for women and demonstrating the significance given to female virginity.¹⁶² Bon demeaned women still further by pin-pointing that it was specifically their sexual usefulness that was important. Those women that were ‘infirm, or defective in what should belong to women fit for the companie and bed of

¹⁵⁷ Stephen Orgel says that ‘the fear of losing control of women’s chastity, a very valuable possession that guaranteed the legitimacy of one’s heirs and especially valuable for a father as a piece of disposable property, is a logical consequence of a patriarchal structure’, Impersonations, p. 36. Virginity at marriage was the most reliable means of avoiding illegitimacy. See Joan Cadden, Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 260-65; Kathleen Coyne Kelly, Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages (London: Routledge, 2000).
¹⁵⁸ Jankowski, Pure Resistance, p. 4.
¹⁵⁹ Coyne Kelly, preface, ix-x.
¹⁶¹ Georgijevic, G7r.
¹⁶² Sarah Salih states that ‘anxieties about legitimacy led elite classes to place a high value on women’s virginity, narrowly defined as technical intactness […] Secular virginity, because necessarily temporary, includes connotations of availability and desirability’, Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), p. 18.
a King’ fell out of favour and were sent away to the ‘Old Seraglio’. According to Bon, the Old Seraglio housed women that had ‘belonged to the deceased Grand Signors; those women likewise, which through their evil behaviour, and conditions, are fallen into disgrace with the King’. If the women were ‘disobedient, incorrigible, and insolent’ they were ‘turned out and sent into the old Seraglio, as being utterly rejected, and cast off, and the best part of what they have is taken from them’. Baudier commented that some of the women that were presented to the Grand Signor might be exiled to the Old Seraglio if they did not possess ‘allurements sufficient to captivate him: or when as years (an Enemy to beauty) doth blemish them with wrinkles and doth ravish the honour of their delicate complexions, and the glory of their countenances’. The attraction of the pure, the new and unsullied is an enduring one.

Women in the early modern period and beyond were categorized and commodified according to their sexual worth. This commodification and classification is apparent in descriptions by Christian authors of the treatment of female captives in markets throughout the Ottoman Empire. The evidence suggests that being presented for public sale in the market-place was an appalling experience for women. Nicolay claimed to have seen a young girl stripped and 3 times visited in lesse than an houre, on one of the sides of the Bezestan, an Hongarian mayden, being of thirteene or fourteene yeers of age, and of beautie indifferent, whiche in the ende was sold and delivered unto an olde marchant a Turke, for foure and thirtie ducates.

In many cases merchants, buyers and onlookers were primarily concerned with the physical, virginal intactness of female captives:

Now when there is a virgin that is beautiful and fair, she is held at a high rate and is sold for far more than any other and for security of her virginity the seller is not only bound to the restitution of the money (if she prove otherwise) to him that bought her, but is for his fraud fined at a great sum of money.

The women’s financial worth was gauged by their beauty, physique and sexual status. The words ‘if she prove otherwise’, in parenthesis, confirms and leaves little
doubt that the woman will be used sexually, and if the purchaser has been sold damaged goods, he will be entitled to have his money returned. If the purchaser was not entirely satisfied with his purchase he could ostensibly claim she was no longer a virgin and his word would be taken in good faith. By that stage, having been sexually used by the purchaser the woman was no longer a virgin and her value had decreased. Discussing the sale of Christian women and children at the market in ‘Grand Cairo’ the captive Joseph Pitts described the invasive market inspections which were carried out to confirm virginity:

the chapmen have liberty to view their Faces and to put their Fingers into their mouths to feel their teeth and also to feel their breasts […] they are sometimes permitted by the sellers (in a modest way) to be searched whether they are virgins or no.\footnote{Pitts, p. 73. According to Pitts most of the women were Muscovites and Russians. A Muscovite was a native or inhabitant of Moscow, or the former principality of Muscovy. See \textit{OED}.}

One wonders what modicum of modesty could be salvaged from such an intrusive investigation. The experience would only serve to reinforce the sexual nature of what lay ahead for the women, whether ‘virgin or no’.\footnote{Pitts, p. 73.} These descriptions show the immense cultural significance given to virginity and to the unbroken hymen as the physical proof of that virginity.\footnote{Coyne Kelly states that ‘because of its inherent instability as a sign, the hymen has been regularly supplemented by other means of verification […] a woman’s behaviour and dress, the color of her urine, the direction in which her breasts point and her ability to drink from a magic cup or to carry a sieve full of water have served as proofs of virginity’, \textit{preface}, ix. Tuccia, a Roman vestal virgin, had to carry a sieve full of water from the Tiber to the Temple of Vesta to prove her virginity.}

Early modern debate over the hymen began in the late sixteenth century when Vesalius and others started to use dissection and observation to test the theories of Galen and other ancient Greeks.\footnote{Marie H. Loughlin, \textit{Hymeneutics: Interpreting Virginity on the Early Modern Stage} (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London; Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1997), p. 30. Vesalius, Fallopius and Nicholas Culpeper remained ambivalent over its existence, while others, such as J. Berengarius, Bartholinus the younger, Helkiah Crooke and James Guillemeau claimed to have seen it or believed in its material existence as testified by others. See also Sara Read, \textit{Menstruation and the Female Body in Early Modern England} (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).} In his encyclopaedic \textit{Microcosmographia} (1615), Helkiah Crooke (1576-1648) discussed the hymen as a marker of virginity:

\begin{quote}
It hath been an old question and so continueth to this day, whether there be any certaine markes or notes of virginity in women and what they are. Almost all Physitians thinke that there is a certain membrane sometimes in the midst of the necke of the wombe, sometimes immediately after the passage of the water, placed ouerthwart which they call \textit{Hymen}.\end{quote}
membrane they say is perforated in the middest to give way to their courses, and is broken or torn in their first accompanying with men; and therefore they call it *Clastrum virginitatis*, The lock of virginity: for which their opinion they bring testimonies out of the holy scriptures.173

Although Crooke suggested a consensus amongst physicians as to the existence of the hymen he cited three authorities with varying opinions: Colombus174 who claimed to have seen the hymen; Laurentius, who ‘hath cut up maiden children borne before their time, of three moneths, of 3, 4, 6 and 7 years old, and yet hee could never finde it though he searched curiously for it with a Probe […] and therefore he thinketh that it is but a mere fable’; and Fallopious who adhered to the idea that virginity was proven by the blood displayed after the hymen was ruptured.175 Asking whether all virgins bleed ‘at the first bout of copulation’ Nicholas Culpeper grounded his argument on Deuteronomy 22176 and on foreign tradition:

The Africans had a custom to shut the Bridegroom and the Bride up in a Chamber, after they were married […] And an old woman stood at the door to receive a bloody sheet from the Bridegroom, that she might shew it in triumph to all the guests […] And if there was no blood to be seen, the Bride was to be sent home to her friends with disgrace, and the guests went sadly home without their Dinners.177

Travellers and captives frequently included anecdotes about wedding nights and the custom of examining bloodied sheets or garments as proof of virginity.178 There was considerable patriarchal concern over the control of women and intense anxiety surrounding the secrets of female sexuality.

173 Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, A Description of the Body of Man, p. 255. Crooke’s text was mainly a translation of European medical authorities. Crooke described the hymen as ‘the cup of a little rose halfe blowne when the bearded leaves are taken away’ or a ‘great clove Gilly-flower when it is moderately blowne’ […] it is called *Hymen quasi Limen* […] the entrance, the pilier, or locke, or flower of virginity’, p. 235. Jane Sharpe suggested this gave rise to the word ‘deflowered’, Sharp, *The Midwives Book*, p. 48.

174 Renaldus Columbus (1516-1559). His *De re anatomica* was published posthumously in 1559. See Laqueur, *Making Sex*, p. 64.

175 Crooke, pp. 255-56.

176 Deuteronomy 22:15: ‘Then the father and mother of the young woman shall take and bring out the evidence of the young woman’s virginity to the elders of the city at the gate’.


178 In Morocco Thomas Pellow revealed that after seizing and stripping his new bride the husband makes ‘what Haste he can, that he may deliver her Drawers’ to waiting women and if such signs appear on them as are expected ‘the Drawers are sent to all their Relations in Triumph’ and there is music and rejoicing, p. 76. If there is no blood and he finds her to be ‘no Maid’, she is stripped of her finery and thrown out in shame. Joseph Pitts noted the custom in Algiers where the bride ‘takes off her drawers […] and puts under herself to receive the Tokens of her Virginity’, p. 28.
Captives’ Accounts

Depictions of tyrannical infidels systematically raping and besmirching the chaste bodies of Christian women, while condemning their souls to eternal damnation, formed some of the most common images of contact with the Muslim world. In his captivity narrative published in 1693, Francis Brooks gives an account of a young Christian girl who was captured and fell victim to the passions of Moulay Ismaïl, Emperor of Morocco. In his litany of anecdotes of the tyranny of the Emperor’s rule, Brooks described the capture, in 1685, of an English ship bound for Barbados, on board which were four women, including a mother and daughter. The pirate captain was eager to ascertain the younger woman’s marital status and upon learning that she was a virgin put her in the cabin ‘lest any of his own barbarous Crew should offer to lie with her’. The other three Christian women were sent to the viceroy’s house and their fate is not disclosed. Brooks described how the Emperor urged, tempted, threatened and ultimately tortured her to ‘turn Moor, and lie with him’. Despite being beaten and abused by his ‘Negro Women’ the girl ‘prayed still to the Lord to strengthen her, and held a Resolution to withstand him’. She resisted being stripped, whipped, starved and pricked with sharp pins until eventually:

Tortures and the hazards of her Life forced her to yield, or resign her Body to him, tho her Heart was otherwise inclined […] He had her wash’d and clothed her in their fashion of Apparel, and lay with her, having his desire fulfilled he inhumanly, in great haste forc’d her away out of his presence.

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179 Brooks, Barbarian Cruelty (London, 1693), pp. 27-28. It was reprinted in Boston in 1700. Rather than giving his own personal experience of torture or conversion Brooks presents visceral accounts of the suffering and abjection of other captives.
180 Abul Nasir Moulay Ismail as-Samin bin Sharif reigned from 1672-1727. He was the second ruler of the Moroccan Alawi dynasty and built the capital city of Meknes with slave labour. He kept over fourteen hundred concubines. Thomas Phelps also noted his ‘inhumane, but yet through custom, to him Natural Barbarities, Killing and Dragging’, A True Account of the Captivity of Thomas Phelps at Machaness in Barbary (London, 1685), p. 8.
181 Brooks, Barbarian Cruelty, pp. 27-28. The women were probably of the lower-classes as they were not named or ransomed.
182 Ibid., p. 29.
183 Ibid., p. 32.
184 Ibid.
185 Ibid., p. 34. The tragic literary elements of this anecdote call to mind the emotive scene in Oroonoko (1688) where the virgin Imoinda is summoned for use in the old king’s bed. The king waited to receive his ‘long’d for Virgin’ but Imoinda ‘all in Tears, threw her self on the Marble and ‘said a thousand things to appease the raging of his Flame’, Oroonoko: An Authoritative Text, Historical Backgrounds, Criticism, ed. by Joanna Lipking (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 17.
The young girl did not convert willingly but remained steadfast in her religion until her body could no longer withstand the physical torture. Although her heart was ‘otherwise inclined’, she surrendered her faith and her virginity and became pregnant. Brooks included no further information about the woman but other travellers confirm that she eventually rose to a position of considerable status. Evoking endangered virtue created an atmosphere of titillation and suspense and warned of the inherent danger to women in captivity.

Other accounts endeavour to elicit pity and sympathy in order to raise money for redemption purposes. John Braithwaite (1696-1740), who accompanied John Russell, the British consul-general on an expedition to Moulay Ismaïl in 1727, gave an account of ‘one Mrs. Shaw, an Irishwoman, […] who had been a Moor upwards of 9 Years’. Soon after she was captured, Moulay Ismaïl ordered her to be placed among the rest of his concubines and ‘having an Inclination to lie with her, forced her to turn Moor, for his Conscience would not permit him to lie with a Christian’. Although Shaw was young and ‘not unhandsome’, Moulay Ismaïl had subsequently taken a dislike to her and given her to a Spanish renegade who was unable to maintain her so ‘the poor Woman was almost naked and starved […] had almost forgot her English, and was an Object of great Charity, having a poor Child at her

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186 For more on the ‘English woman’ and others who achieved elevated status in the Ottoman Empire see Matar, Britain and Barbary, pp. 92-110. Dominique Busnot, a French redemptionist, who visited Morocco in 1704, 1708 and 1712, described the English woman who rose to a respected position in Moulay Ismaïl’s harem: ‘The next in favour with the king after Sultana Zidana is an English woman who was taken when she was fifteen years of Age and whose Constancy he overcame by causing her to be cruelly Whipp’d and her feet to be put into hot Oil to oblige her to turn Mahometian, and take her into the Number of his Wives; she is Affable, Courteous and willing to do a good Turn’, The History of the Reign of Muley Ismael (London, 1715), pp. 50-51. The English woman is also mentioned in A Description of the Nature of Slavery, p. 32.

187 Bekkaoui, White Women Captives, p. 23. While women did face the threat of sexual violation and rape, Matar points out that this was (and still is) common in battle, war and piracy in England and elsewhere, where victory was often asserted by the rape of the opponents’ womenfolk. Britain and Barbary, p. 95.

188 John Braithwaite, The History of the Revolutions in the Empire of Morocco (London, 1729), p. 191. She is probably the same ‘Margaret Shea’ who appears on ‘A List of the English Ships taken by the Sallee Rovers, and of the Men carry’d Captives to Mequinez, from Oct. 5, 1714 to July 14, 1721’ in A Description of the Nature of Slavery. She is described as ‘a Woman Passenger, was forced to Turn Moor’, p. 19.

189 Braithwaite, p. 191. Lancelot Addison noted the unwillingness of some Muslims to ‘lie with’ women that were not of their own faith: ‘the mour illuminated Moors confine themselves to one of their own Perswasion, esteeming Concubinage with Infidels (under which name all are comprised that profess not Mahumatism) to be an unexorable uncleanness’, West Barbary, p. 189.
Great Ey’d Ladies

Breast, not above a Fortnight old’. Despite being depicted as such an abject victim, Margaret Shaw was not ransomed and did not return to Ireland.

Contemporary accounts confirm, reiterate or repeat accusations of the unquenchable passion of Barbary rulers for young, virginal women and their subsequent disregard or ill treatment of them. The anonymous author of *A Description of the Nature of Slavery among the Moors and the Cruel Sufferings of those that fall into it* (1721) stated that Moulay Ismaïl ‘touches none but Virgins’ and his great number of women were perpetually young as they were constantly renewed. John Whitehead alluded to sixty-year-old Moulay Ismail’s predilection for his ‘School of young virgins’. Whitehead also commented on the variety of the women who were ‘of diverse Colours as White, Black, Mullattos or Copper colour’d of several sorts’. The former captive, Thomas Phelps, stated that his women were not able ‘by all their Charms to avoid his Fury, but are more objects of his implacable rage than any other passion’. John Windus alleged that Moulay Ismail seldom bestowed his Favours on a Woman more than once, unless she ‘proves with Child’ and then she has a fair chance ‘to partake of his Bed again’. Windus alleged that he was so feared by the women that he had ‘a sort of Adoration paid him’. Windus claimed to have been credibly informed by an unhappy English woman who had been two years in captivity and forced to ‘turn Moor’ that ‘the very Excrements and Spittle, which come from the Emperor, were preserved in little Boxes by his Women, as believing anything that came from him, would keep them

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190 Braithwaite, p. 191. Shaw is described as an Irishwoman. Her first language may have been Irish, not English.
191 A Description of the Nature of Slavery, p. 32.
192 ‘The Captivity Narrative of John Whitehead’, in Matar, *Britain and Barbary*, Appendix 2, pp. 177-89 (p.182). The original manuscript is in the British Library, Sloane MSS 90. Matar confirms there is nothing known about John Whitehead, but his benefactor Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753) was a British collector and physician.
193 Ibid. Brooks also noted the colour spectrum of Moulay Ismail’s harem and added ‘he hath store of children of several colours’, *Barbarian Cruelty*, pp. 74-5. Pellow described how Moulay Ismail experimented with his slaves in creating a labour-force coloured to his liking: ‘He always yoaks his best complexioned Subjects to a black Help-mate, and the fair Lady must take up with a Negro’, p. 74. He was apparently so fond of ‘the Blacks and the Copper-coloured […] that he took care to mix them himself, by matching them to the best-complexion’d of his Female Subjects’, pp. 143-44.
194 Phelps, p. 8.
195 Windus, pp. 188-89. According to Windus, ‘by his four Wives, and many Thousands of Women [Moulay Ismail] has a numerous Issue. They say he has seven hundred Sons able to mount Horse; the number of his Daughters is not known’.
196 Ibid., p. 188.
from all Distempers’. Windus depicted an almost cult-like devotion, or indoctrination, in which these ‘unhappy’ women worshiped an all-powerful despotic tyrant, and kept his relics to ward off sickness and harm.

The infidel is portrayed as a creature of nature ruled by uncontrollable bodily urges while the women are passive victims, ‘sexually conquerable and culturally malleable’. According to Bekkaoui, contact with Otherness tainted, contaminated, reinvented and refashioned female identity. In travel accounts and captivity texts Christian men repeatedly affirm their national and religious identity, but the voiceless women featured in their narratives are objectified and are never allowed to assert, reveal or regain their true identities.

Ania Loomba argues that ‘even if she is passive […] the white woman’s contact with the alien male pollutes her’ and what white patriarchy finds most threatening ‘is the possibility of the complicity of white women; their desire for black lovers is feared, forbidden, but always imminent’. It was believed that women, because of their whimsical intellect and hysterical nature would be easily swayed by a myriad of foreign influences and would be unlikely to be able to defend their religious faith. In her discussion of Spanish captives in North Africa, Ellen Friedman points out that women and children ‘were regarded as weakest in the faith and most likely to apostatise under pressure’. Tijana Krstić explains that the church ‘identified miscegenation and interfaith marriage as one of the most menacing problems eroding the cohesion, morale, and dignity of the community’. Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly suggest that not only did women need

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197 Windus, p. 188. Worshiping saints and keeping relics are features of Catholic practice. Some Muslims venerate relics pertaining to Mohammad. Windus critiques the absolutism of Muslim leaders and the iconography of Catholicism.
198 Bekkaoui, ‘Introduction’, in The Female Captive: A Narrative of Facts which happened in Barbary, in the Year 1756 (Cassablanca: Moroccan Cultural Studies Centre, 2003), pp. 1-38 (p. 18). The main characters in Shakespeare’s Othello, first performed in 1604, are the Venetian virgin, Desdemona, and the dark-skinned Moor, Othello. The fear of miscegenation runs throughout the play. In Act I the arch villain Iago warns Brabantio that ‘an old black ram is tupping your white ewe’ (I.i.88-89), and later, ‘your daughter cover’d with a Barbary horse, you’ll have your nephews neigh to you’ (I.i.111-13).
199 Bekkaoui, White Women Captives, p. 33.
200 Ania Loomba, Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 52.
203 Krstić, Contested Conversions to Islam, p. 159.
protecting from the ‘menace of native men’, but they also ran the risk of being unduly affected by the climate, ‘suffering enervation, nervous excitation, and perhaps even “going native”, lapsing into sensuality, laziness, and seduction’.204 Sharing intimate contact with their captors, women could be assimilated into Muslim culture and faith. The idea of Christian women’s bodies in the hands of Muslim men generated a paranoic fear of miscegenation and contamination; that their souls could be claimed by Islam was a source of constant concern.

With little possibility of returning home, the only option for many women was to accept the new culture and faith and endeavour to survive. In his impressive study of Christian and Jewish conversion to Islam in late seventeenth-century Istanbul, Mark Baer affirms that ‘issues of class, gender and religion merged in non-Muslim slave women’ who were the most disadvantaged in Ottoman society ‘and had no control over their sexuality either’.205 They had the most to gain in converting to Islam, and many discovered that they could achieve social advancement and status.206 Bernadette Andrea asserts that Christian women’s prosperity occurred primarily ‘through marriage or concubinage in the harems of powerful men, which […] did not require their conversion’.207 As the Qur’an allows a Muslim man to marry a non-Muslim woman (but a non-Muslim man cannot marry a Muslim woman), captivity for women did not always end in violation and conversion, but in marriage.208 Women who did not convert could be married off to compatriots of their own faith, but were not obliged to do so.209 Matar acknowledges that even in Istanbul in the imperial harem ‘there were women who remained faithful to their Christian faith’.210 However, the majority of women of Christian provenance in the imperial harem did convert to Islam.211 Maria Todorova argues that in the Ottoman Empire ‘the strict division on religious lines prevented integration of the population, except in cases of conversion’.212 Matar affirms that most of the literary sources

204 Manderson and Jolly, p. 11.
205 Baer, ‘Islamic Conversion Narratives of Women’, p. 450. See also Baer, Honored by the Glory of Islam.
207 Bernadette Andrea, Women and Islam, p. 5.
209 Matar, Britain and Barbary, p. 99.
210 Ibid.
211 Andrea, p. 134, note 23.
reveal that Christian women submitted to the domination, both physical and spiritual, of Muslim men. Baer reiterates that through conversion ‘women side-stepped societal power relations and changed their life chances, if only partially and temporarily’.\(^{213}\) In his study of the \textit{Türkenbüchlein},\(^{214}\) John W. Bohnstedt relates that ‘outward’ conversion was the option suggested by Martin Luther in his Exhortation of 1541:

\begin{quote}
Christian wives forcibly separated from their husbands, should obediently share the beds of their Turkish masters if required to do so. They ‘should submit in patience, suffering such a thing for the sake of Christ, without despairing as if they were damned. The soul cannot help what the enemy does to the body’. But let the soul itself remain faithful to Christ.\(^{215}\)
\end{quote}

Theoretically, this may have been sound advice. However, in reality once women had been sexually defiled or, worse still, impregnated, their lives would never be the same. If they escaped or were ransomed there would be little hope of a sympathetic reaction either to their physical violation or to their conversion. Despite the inner convictions of the women’s hearts and souls, conversion is seen to be wrought through a physical and sexual onslaught of the body. Degenhardt states that ‘the sexual act that facilitates conversion to Islam seals its tragic and irreversible stakes’.\(^{216}\) ‘Turning Turk’ for women held specifically sexual connotations and transformed chaste Christian women into the lascivious, menacing women depicted in travelogues and dramatized on the English stage.\(^{217}\) By yielding their bodies, women were seen to have forfeited their souls.

\(^{213}\) Baer, ‘Islamic Conversion Narratives’, p. 47.
\(^{214}\) The \textit{Türkenbüchlein} appeared as printed pamphlets between 1522 and 1543, written by Protestants and Catholics, concerning the Turkish threat to Germany and Christendom.
\(^{216}\) Degenhardt, p. 75.
\(^{217}\) See Introduction, note 8. In the sixteenth century reformed prostitutes were often compared to religious ‘convertites’. The \textit{OED} defines ‘convertite’ as a ‘reformed Magdalen’, highlighting the link between women’s religious and sexual transformation.
Female captivity raised issues of sexual vulnerability and heightened concern about acculturation and assimilation. As women were considered more susceptible than men to religious and cultural conversion, anxiety surrounded the idea of the sexual penetration and conversion of a Christian woman by a Muslim man. A woman’s spiritual identity was indivisibly bound up with that of her physical body so that any assault on her chastity was considered to permanently damage both her body and soul. Patricia Meyer Spacks states that society ‘drew an absolute line between virtuous and non-virtuous sexual conduct in women’. Women’s sexual integrity was extremely important to them, and as the most damaging accusation for a woman was to be labeled a ‘whore’, women themselves were the ‘most effective controllers of their sexual conduct’. Captivity jeopardized this sense of control. Once women had been held captive they were subjected to condemnation and innuendo, and were viewed with suspicion in their communities. Reintegration was fraught with difficulty. The survivor would be expected to recount her vigorous defence against violation and her staunch resistance to conversion. Khalid Bekkaoui suggests that returned women are ‘almost never comfortably re integrated into their community, their stories are discredited, their national and religious identity suspected’. Women were suspected of sexual infidelity and their virtue was called into question – factors which could have a devastating effect on their reputation. Female captives seem to have chosen to remain silent and disappear into anonymity rather than to invite suspicion or gain notoriety or infamy through publishing their accounts. Although the number of women captives is small it is nonetheless great enough to have left a faint literary footprint.

This chapter will firstly provide an indication of the numbers of women taken captive from Western Europe during the early modern period. I will then briefly look

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1 Degenhardt, p. 17.
2 Ibid., p. 123.
4 Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, p. 53.
5 Baepler, p. 11.
7 The notion that women had a greater sex drive than men persisted into the late eighteenth century. Wiesner, p. 27.
at the popularity of fictional female captivity accounts which emerged in the eighteenth century. The core of this chapter will discuss *The Female Captive* (1769) published anonymously by Elizabeth Marsh (1735-1785). This unique narrative, which gives a female perspective on the experience of Barbary captivity, will be analyzed and compared with male captivity accounts. Marsh adopts the principles of sentimental and Gothic fiction and presents herself as a virtuous heroine whose body and soul are in danger of being violated by treacherous mobs, cunning women and a charming but dangerous despot. In particular I will focus on Marsh’s encounters with Muslim women and her experience of inadvertently ‘turning Turk’. An undercurrent of the narrative is Marsh’s embarrassment at being alone and unchaperoned in close proximity to various men. As marriage was the natural vocation for women and stigma attached to not being married, a glaring sub-plot is Marsh’s acquisition of a husband. In this respect her narrative differs from male accounts of captivity. Captives usually wrote to clear their names and redeem themselves but Marsh’s narrative is puzzling and could have done little to salvage her tainted character.

**Female Captivity**

The scarcity of female Barbary captivity narratives from the early modern period is due primarily to the fact that fewer women engaged in the sort of foreign travel that would lead to captivity. Statistically there were fewer women captives in general. R.C. Davis estimates that ninety percent of Barbary captives were adult men and five percent were women. There are sporadic references in male authored captivity narratives to women being taken at sea by pirates. William Okeley mentions a fellow traveller, John Randall who, along with his wife and child, was taken captive in the same ship as Okeley. Randal had a harsh existence in captivity as he not only had to maintain himself but also had to support his wife and child, and ‘went up and down seeking for Relief’. Randal assisted Okeley with his escape plan and helped to build his boat but decided not to risk escape as his wife and child ‘were too dear pledges to be left behind and yet too tender things to undergo our difficulties’. The French captive, Germain Moüette (1652-c.1691), mentions a

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11 Ibid., p. 20. Okeley, moved by Randal’s plight, advised him to make ‘canvas clothes for seamen that are slaves’ and let him ‘sit rent-free’ in his shop.
12 Ibid., p. 43.
French woman, Madam de la Montagne, who was captured with her son and some women servants whilst travelling from Dieppe to the Caribbean in 1670. Moüette recounts the fate of other women on board a young and beautiful Norman Maiden Gentlewoman, that came with Madam de Montagne, fell into the Sea, as did her Maid: The Christian Seamen hastened to their Relief, yet could only save the Maid, the Mistress having sunk under the Keel of the Vessel; and being drowned, at our coming ashore we found her stark naked on the Sand, the Moors having stripp’d her already.

An Irishwoman, Margaret Shea, travelling from Cork to Lisbon on-board the Welcome in 1720, appears as an anomaly on an all-male list entitled ‘A List of the English Ships taken by the Sallee Rovers, and of the Men carry’d Captives to Mequinez, from Oct. 5, 1714 to July 14, 1721’. She is described as a woman passenger ‘forced to turn Moor’. Two Jewish women, Rachel Franco and Blanca Flora, captured while sailing from London to New York, were redeemed from Meknes in 1728 and brought back to England on board a navy vessel, the Monmouth.

Most women taken captive were seized during coastal raids on European towns and villages. Davis suggests that roughly thirty-seven percent of all those captured on land were female and that the women in Barbary households and harems were ‘eight to ten times more likely to have been taken in coastal raids than from on board a ship’. In White Women Captives in North America: Narratives of Enslavement, 1735-1830, Khalid Bekkaoui includes an English translation of an account of the interrogation of Maria de Morales by the Inquisitional Tribunal on the island of Feurteventura in 1610. De Morales, a woman of about fifty years old, stated that ‘fifteen or sixteen years ago, a Moorish captain, called Jaban Araez raided this island in seven crafts, plundering and causing much damage, and taking captive

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14 Ibid., p. 4.
15 This list is appended to the anonymous narrative A Description of the Nature of Slavery among the Moors and the Cruel Sufferings of those that fall into it (London, 1721), pp. 13-21, (p. 19). The captive Thomas Pellow also appears on this list as ’Boy, turn’d Moor’, p. 16. Mequinez is a city in northern Morocco. Moulay Ismail chose Mequinez as his capital and transformed it with a fifty-year building project.
16 A Description of the Nature of Slavery, p. 19.
18 Davis, p. 36.
about seventy people: young and old, males and females’. Interestingly de Morales is not questioned in the document as to whether she herself has converted but is interrogated about other ‘converted Christians’, who they were and to which Christian countries they belonged. De Morales escaped Moroccan captivity on 6 March 1610 going first to Spain and then on to Lisbon, ‘still clad in the Muslim apparel in which she had come’.

Madeira was raided in 1617 and twelve hundred men, women and children were seized. Ten years later, in a daring nautical mission, the Flemish renegade Murad Reis, formerly known as Jan Jansz, sailed to Iceland and captured 400 inhabitants of Reykjavik, most of whom were women and children. Of the two hundred and three people taken from Ceriale in Italy in 1637, one hundred and twenty five were women. The same year three hundred and fifteen captives, mostly women and children, were snatched in a dawn raid on Calpe, Spain. Francis Knight, an English merchant who was captured by Algerian corsairs in December 1631 and spent seven years as a captive, recounts numerous tales of Barbary piracy in his captivity narrative including the raid on Calpe:

the first of September they took Colpe in Spain, a little towne eight leagues to the orient of Allicants; they landed when first Aurora gave her light, and continued there till one or two of the clocke in the afternoon, besides the spoiles, they brought from thence 315 Christians; the women and children the next day, they sent upon a Galley for Argiere, but put all the men to the Oare.

In another raid by Murad Reis and his corsairs in 1631, the village of Baltimore in County Cork was sacked and one hundred and seven villagers were taken from their homes and enslaved in North Africa. A list ‘compiled by the burghers of Baltimore’ shortly after the raid in 1631 confirms that there were thirty-four women

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21 Ibid., p. 261. There are no insinuations of sexual violation or spiritual coercion even though de Morales was for many years a slave to Sultan Moulay Ahmed (1549-1603) ‘who was pleased with her service’. Ahmed al-Mansur of the Saadi dynasty reigned from 1578 until his death in 1603.
22 Bekkaoui, White Women Captives, p. 262.
23 Ibid., p. 2.
26 Knight, A Relation of Seven Yeares Slaverie, pp. 9-10.
and fifty children seized. Thirty-eight of the fifty children were female. One woman, listed as ‘Stephen Brodderbrooke’s wife’, was heavily pregnant. Of a total of seventy-two females only two are mentioned by name. The others are merely identified as someone’s wife, daughter or maid. In 1640, sixty men, women and children were snatched from the Cornish coast. Cornwall was raided again in 1645 by a Cornish renegade who carried off ‘goods and prisoners, including about 200 women, some of them ladies of rank and fortune’. Linda Colley states that en route to Tangiers, in the late seventeenth century, Sir Hugh Cholmley’s family’s maids were captured by Barbary corsairs. Seventeenth and eighteenth-century lists of captives freed from Barbary attest to the fact that there were fewer women redeemed than men. As early as 1587, Charles Pandon, a French redemptionist stated that he had ransomed and freed twenty ‘honestes Dames’ from Tunisian captivity. An appendix to John Dunton’s A True Journal of the Sally Fleet (1637) lists two hundred and ninety three captives redeemed from Algiers, eleven of whom are women. Edmond Cason’s record of two hundred and forty-four captives redeemed from slavery in Algiers in 1646 includes nineteen women (eight Irish and two Scots). Fifteen years after being seized from Baltimore a woman named ‘Joane Bradbrook of Baltimore’ appears on Cason’s list, and was apparently redeemed without the rest of her family. Another woman, Ellen Hawkins, redeemed for 86

Sack of Baltimore’, History Ireland, 14 (2006), 14-18. Most of those taken were English settlers but unidentified Irish people may also have been seized. See Ekin, p. 146.
28 Ekin, p. 146. A List of Baltimore People Who Were Carried away by the Turk, the 20 June 1631 is from the Council Book of Kinsale. See also CSPI 1625-32, pp. 621-22.
29 They are Bessie Fodd and Besse Peeter. See Ekin, pp. 423-26.
30 Davis, p. 7.
31 Bekkaoui, White Women Captives, p. 2.
32 Colley, Captives, p. 31.
34 Charles Pandon, Copie d’une Lettre Envoye de Coutron en Calabre (Lyons, 1587), p. 3. Quoted in MacLean and Matar, Britain and the Islamic World, 1558-1713, p. 19.
35 John Dunton, A True Journal of the Sally Fleet with the Proceedings of the Voyage (London, 1637), appendix. John Dunton was a former Salé captive who returned to Morocco in 1636 with a fleet of eight ships to besiege Salé and free Christian captives. The eleven women redeemed were: Mary Russell, Anne Bedford, Joan Gillions (London); Jane Dawe (Dorchester); Rebecca Man (Exeter); Grace Greenfield (Bristol); Grace Marten (Bantrey); Margaret Bowles, Katharine Richards, Mary Batten (Yohall); Elizabeth Renordan (Kingsaile). See Matar, Britain and Barbary, p. 97.
36 Two of the nineteen women who appear on Cason’s list were from Baltimore, Co. Cork. They were Ellen Hawkins and Joan Bradbrook, Cason, A Relation, pp. 18-20.
37 She was ransomed for 150 Spanish dollars or pieces of eight. She is possibly the wife (then pregnant) or daughter of ‘Stephen Brodderbrooke’, from the 1631 Baltimore list.
pieces of eight, may be the wife of ‘Ould Haunkin’ from the Baltimore list. Two women on Cason’s list were redeemed with their children.\textsuperscript{38}

**Female Captivity in Fiction**

As is evident from the large amount of fiction featuring female captivity which emerged in the eighteenth century, readers had an obvious fascination with the enslavement of women and their experiences in alien surroundings. After the success of Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and the emergence and flourishing of the novel as a genre, a plethora of fictional narratives were written, marking the 1720s as ‘the apex of the oriental captivity narrative in English fiction’.\textsuperscript{39} Of the seven novels published by Penelope Aubin (c.1679-1731) between 1721 and 1729, oriental captivity is the main theme, or features prominently, in five of them.\textsuperscript{40} Joe Snader observes that Aubin ‘concentrates on continental captives, passive noblemen, proselytizing priests and women character types that are essentially absent from factual accounts of Barbary captivity’.\textsuperscript{41} Of the prolific fiction written by the author and actress Eliza Haywood (c.1693-1756), three novels, *Idalia* (1723), *The Fruitless Enquiry* (1727) and *Philidore and Placentia* (1727) feature female heroines in captivity in Eastern locations. In *Idalia*, rather than experiencing tyranny and sexual exploitation, the captive heroine develops a friendship with her captors, transforming the standard plot of captivity narratives.\textsuperscript{42} *The Fruitless Enquiry* (1727) and *Philidore and Placentia* (1727) have episodes featuring the castration of Christian men as a result of their liaisons with beautiful harem women.\textsuperscript{43} Haywood also revised and acted in a play written by Captain Robert Hurst entitled *The Fair Captive* (1721) which tells the story of a Spanish woman, Isabella, who is held captive in

\textsuperscript{38} ‘Mary Weymouth, and her two children James and John […] Bridget Randall and her son of London’, Cason, p. 23.

\textsuperscript{39} Snader, *Caught Between Worlds*, p.168. Richard Head (c. 1637-1686) produced the first English fictionalization of the Oriental captivity plot in the first volume of *The English Rogue* (1665). The protagonist, Meriton Latroon, spends time in Turkish captivity and adds the usual stereotypical images including the licentiousness of the women. Snader, p. 139. Many of Latroon’s escapades are borrowed from Thomas Herbert’s *A Relation of Some Yeares Travaile* (1634), enlarged editions published in 1638, 1665, and 1677.

\textsuperscript{40} *The Adventures of Count de Vinevil and His Family* (1721), *The Life and Amorous Adventures of Lucinda* (1722), *The Noble Slaves* (1722), *The Life of Charlotte du Pont* (1723) and *The Life and Adventures of the Young Albertus* (1728).

\textsuperscript{41} Snader, p. 149.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 159.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 160.
Barbary captivity, featuring an English female captive, provided the storyline for William Rufus Chetwood for the immensely popular and successful The Voyages and Adventures of Captain Robert Boyle (1726).

The idea of women’s incarceration at the hands of bloodthirsty and lustful North African captors inspired a medley of imaginative literature. The distinction between fiction and non-fiction is often blurred. Authentic narratives often contain grossly exaggerated, imagined or plagiarised events while fictional accounts often incorporated factual material. The early nineteenth century saw the appearance of several female Barbary captivity narratives posing as authentic. An Affecting History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mary Velnet, An Italian Lady, Who was Seven Years a Slave in Tripoli, three of which she was confined in a dungeon, loaded with irons, and four times put to the most cruel tortures ever invented by man was first published in 1800 and was republished several times up to 1828. In 1806 William Crary published an ‘ill-disguised plagiarism’ of the Velnet account, purporting to be a reprint of a British original. It appeared as The History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin Who Was Six Years a Slave in Algiers: two of which she was confined in a dark and dismal dungeon, loaded with irons. These titles reflect the sinister content that was expected from a narrative of female captivity. Thirteen editions of this narrative were printed by nine different publishers between 1806 and 1818, indicating the popularity and demand for such tales. In 1820, An Authentic Narrative of the Shipwreck and Sufferings of Mrs. Eliza Bradley was published in America. This also claimed to be an authentic autobiography and a

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44 Eliza Fowler Haywood, The Fair Captive: A Tragedy (London, 1721). In an ‘Advertisement to the Reader’ Haywood takes credit for re-writing the play ‘excepting in the parts of Alphonso and Isabella their remains not twenty lines of the original’, xii. See Bridget Orr, Empire on the English Stage 1660-1714 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

45 The full title is The Voyages and Adventures of Captain Robert Boyle, in several parts of the World. Intermix’d with the story of Mrs. Villars, an English lady with whom he made his surprizing escape from Barbary: the History of an Italian Captive and the LIFE of Don Pedro Aquilo, &c. Full of various and amazing Turns of Fortune. Three of Chetwood’s other novels featured Oriental captivity.

46 For publishing details of American Barbary captivity narratives see Baepler, Appendix, pp. 303-10.

47 James R. Lewis, ‘Savages of the Sea: Barbary Captivity Tales and Images of Muslims in the Early Republic’, Journal of American Culture, 13.2 (1990), 75-84, (p. 78). Velnet was depicted as Italian and Martin as possibly English. Baepler suggests readers might have thought her to be an American, p. 147.

48 William Crary published a further edition in 1807 retaining the same title. Eleven of the subsequent reprints are of the 1807 edition, while only one used the 1806 version. See Liberty’s Captives: Narratives of Confinement in the Print Culture of the Early Republic, ed. by Daniel E. Williams and others (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), p.105.
reprint of a British original. It is now known to be ‘a work of anonymous fiction’.49 Although published in America, these accounts feature European rather than American women.50 Readers were offered terrifying and titillating accounts of female subjugation and threatened violation inflicted by raging despots in Gothic-style dungeons.51 The sensationalist narratives of Velnet and Martin both used the same lurid frontispiece depicting a suggestive image of a defenceless young woman in chains with head and eyes downcast but with her bare breasts protruding evocatively.52 The woman is depicted as a victim of sexualized violence: ‘an enormous collar was fixed round my neck, and another still larger round my waste, to both of these was attached a large iron chain, the end of which, was fixed to a ring in the wall […] two iron rings around each of my wrists, to each of which a chain was fixed’.53 Eliza Bradley’s sufferings were also designed to titillate the reader:

The unmerciful Arabs had deprived me of my gown, bonnet, shoes and stockings, and left me no articles of clothing but my petticoat and shimmy,54 which exposed my head, and almost naked body, to the blazing heat of the sun’s darting rays.55

The literary formula of the incarcerated, manacled or stripped body of a white, Christian woman destined to be ravished by dark, unmerciful captors raised a myriad of conflicting emotions. That there was a demand for this literature is evidenced by the many editions to which these texts ran. These fictive accounts exaggerated the experiences of women captives for a reading public that increasingly expected to be thrilled and excited.

51 The female victim was threatened sexually but the threat was treated symbolically through violent scenes rather than being actually realised: ‘On my arrival, orders were given to the four Turks selected to execute the Bashaw’s barbarous laws, to strip me: after being divested of my clothing, one of the monsters seizing me by the hair, at the same time another taking me by the feet, stretched me on the platform of the horrid machine! the spears or spikes which it contained soon pierced my flesh’, An Affecting History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mary Velnet, An Italian Lady, who was Seven Years a Slave in Tripoli (Sag-Harbor NY: Alden Spooner, 1806), p. 55.
52 Four of the subsequent printers added new engravings of Martin imprisoned in her cell.
53 Baepler, p. 156.
54 Shimmy is a US corruption of chemise, an undergarment, a short nightdress or item of lingerie. See OED.
55 Baepler, p. 256.
‘Factual’ Female Captivity Accounts

The earliest autobiographical account of Barbary captivity written by a woman is that of a Dutch woman, Maria ter Meetelen, who, in 1748, published an account of her twelve years captivity in Morocco, entitled Wonderbaarlyke en merkwaardige gevallen van een twaalf jarige slaverny, van een vrouspersoon, genaemt Maria ter Meetelen, woonagtig tot Medenblik (1748). In 1731 at the age of twenty-seven, ter Meetelen travelled with her husband from Spain to the Netherlands and was captured at sea and held captive in Morocco for twelve years. Five years after her release she published an account of her experience which she claims to have started writing on 28 October 1733 in the early period of her captivity. Ter Meetelen cast herself as a powerful heroine and embarked on a journey of self-aggrandisement. Rather than languishing in self-pity or exhibiting overt signs of feminine sensibility, such as crying or swooning, she displayed courage and intuitiveness. Fortified by her strong Catholic faith and belief in the miraculous power of God, she assumed control over her destiny. She defied gender constrictions and took on the roles of protector and provider, both responsibilities usually undertaken by men. She showed keen entrepreneurial skills by running a tavern. She also contravened contemporary notions of feminine propriety by regularly consorting with the sultan – a fact that did not go unnoticed and was condemned by her fellow captives.

56 Maria ter Meetelen, Wonderbaarlyke en merkwaardige gevallen van een twaalf jarige slaverny, van een vrouspersoon, genaemt Maria ter Meetelen, woonagtig tot Medenblik (Hoorn: Jacob Duyn’s widow, 1748). Only two copies survive. There were no further editions or translations until 1950 when her account was edited in Tussen zeerovers en Christenslaven by H. Hardenberg. In 1956 an incomplete French version based on this edition appeared L’Annotation ponctuelle de la description de voyage étonnante et la captivité remarquable et triste by G. H. Bousquet and G. W. Bousquet-Mirandolle. An Arabic translation of this version was published in 1996 by Idriss abu Idriss, Min Taareekh al-Maghrib wa Haddaaratuha al-Islamiyya: Quissat al-Houlandiyya Maria ter Meetelen. In 2006 a complete version was coedited by Laura van der Broek in Christenslaven: De slavernij-ervaringen van Cornelis Stout in Algiers (1678-1680) en Maria ter Meetelen in Maroko, 1731-1743. Laura van der Broek has compared the published manuscript with letters written by ter Meetelen during her captivity and vouches for its authenticity. In 2011 Khalid Bekkaoui translated ter Meetelen’s autobiography into English and published it in his anthology of female captivity narratives as Miraculous and Remarkable Events of Twelve Years Slavery, of a Woman Called Maria ter Meetelen, Resident of Medemblik (1748). See Bekkaoui, White Women Captives, pp. 62-120. This is the version I have consulted. Further references are given in the text. See also Caroline Stone, The Curious and Amazing Adventures of Maria ter Meetelen Twelve Years a Slave (1731-43) (Kilkerran, Ayrshire: Hardinge Simpole, 2010).

57 Ter Meetelen left home as a young girl and travelled around Europe. She dressed as a man and served in a dragoon regiment until it was discovered she was a woman and was expelled. She married in Spain in 1728.

58 Ter Meetelen’s husband went to the Indies in 1745 leaving her pregnant and with two children. She may have published for financial reasons. She noted important dates and events, most of which can be corroborated.

59 She also repaired and maintained several dwellings.
In 1769 Elizabeth Marsh became the first English woman to publish an account of her captivity in Morocco, albeit almost two hundred years after the earliest account of an English male captive emerged.\textsuperscript{60} The Female Captive: A Narrative of Facts which Happened in Barbary in the Year 1756, appeared in two volumes, priced at five shillings, published by Charles Bathurst of Fleet Street, London and printed by subscription\textsuperscript{61} (Figure 13).

The title page gives no clue as to its author, other than to declare that it was ‘Written by Herself’, and all names and dates in the text are left blank.\textsuperscript{62} The book had

\textsuperscript{60} ‘The Worthy Enterprise of John Fox, in Delivering 266 Christians Out of the Captivity of the Turks’ which was published in Richard Hakluyt’s Principall Navigations in 1589 was probably taken from a version announced in the Stationers’ Register on July 23, 1579. In 1587 Thomas Saunders published a twenty-four page pamphlet describing his captivity A True Description and Breefe Discourse of a Most Lamentable Voyage made latelie to Tripolie in Barbarie in a Ship named Jesus (1587). It was reprinted by Hakluyt in the first edition of The Principall Navigations (1589), pp. 192-9.


\textsuperscript{62} The original, unpaginated manuscript entitled ‘Narrative of her Captivity in Barbary’, discovered by Felicity Nussbaum in the library of UCLA, is not in Elizabeth Marsh’s handwriting. Colley suggests it is a copy of an early version of The Female Captive, written by Marsh in Chatham,
popular appeal and sold well, with Colley estimating that seven hundred and fifty copies were issued in 1769. There were no further editions, hence its rarity today. The book received a short commentary in the *Monthly Review* (1769) and a five-page analysis in the *Critical Review* 28 (1769). The *Monthly Review* declared that *The Female Captive* contains, ‘if we are not deceived by fair appearances, the real story of a young lady [...] who having the misfortune to be taken by a Salletteine, is carried into Barbary, where she with great difficulty avoids the efforts made by the emperor of Morocco to engage her in his Seraglio’. The review contended negatively that it would, ‘like many a dull story, be the less regarded for its being true’, suggesting that the exotic imaginings of literary fiction were sometimes preferred and valued over accounts of actual experience. Although the *Critical Review* quoted lengthy passages from the book, it concurred that the narrative contained ‘no very interesting incidents’. Like the *Monthly Review* it accepted that the account was genuine and congratulated ‘the fair lady on the release from her captivity’. A condensed version of the book appeared in *Blackwood’s Magazine* in 1934 without mentioning the original publication. The British Library holds the only known extant printed copy of *The Female Captive*. This copy belonged to Sir William Musgrave (1735-1800) who provided handwritten notes and insertions for names, dates and places omitted in the text. Colley demonstrates that many aspects

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England, in 1769, thirteen years after her captivity in Morocco. This manuscript is bound up with Marsh’s Indian journal which is held in the Special Collections, Charles Young Research Library, UCLA (Item 170604). See Felicity Nussbaum, ‘British Women Write the East after 1750: Revisiting a ‘Feminine Orient’, in *British Women’s Writing in the Long Eighteenth Century: Authorship, Politics and History*, ed. by Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 139, note 20. At the time of publication Elizabeth Marsh was married to James Crisp. Her maiden name will be used as it is the name by which she is best known.

63 Colley, *The Ordeal*, p. 137.
65 Boats or pirates from Salé.
67 *Critical Review*, p. 217. The passages quoted relate primarily to Marsh’s personal encounter with Sidi Mohammad.
68 Ibid., p. 217.
70 It bears the shelf-mark 1417.a.5. I have consulted this copy for my research. In 2003 Khalid Bekkaoui published an edition of *The Female Captive* based on the copy held in the British Library. In 2011 he reproduced the narrative in an anthology of eight female Barbary narratives entitled *White Women Captives in North Africa: Narratives of Enslavement, 1735-1830*. Felicity Nussbaum is preparing a combined edition of both of Marsh’s manuscripts, in conjunction with Khalid Bekkaoui for Broadview Press.
71 Colley, *The Ordeal*, p. 147. William Musgrave, sixth baronet, was an antiquarian, vice-president of the Royal Society, (1780) and trustee of the British Museum, (1783). He had an extensive library, the catalogue of which is held by the British Museum (Add. MS.25,403). See *ODNB*. Linda Colley
of Marsh’s life, her captivity and details contained in *The Female Captive* can be verified and corroborated by contemporary documents. Copies of letters written by her fellow captives are held in the National Archives, Kew.\(^7^2\) The diary of George Marsh, Elizabeth Marsh’s uncle, which he compiled, long after her captivity, in the 1790s, also substantiates her account.\(^7^3\)

**Biography**

Prior to her capture in 1756, Elizabeth Marsh (1735-1785) was ‘happily situated’ at Port Mahon, on the island of Menorca, where her father, Milbourne Marsh, a naval officer, was stationed.\(^7^4\) Her uncle, George Marsh, records that while in Menorca, Marsh was engaged to Captain Towry of the Navy.\(^7^5\) Between 1756 and 1763 Britain was engaged in the Seven Years War against France which transformed Britain’s national image and expanded its imperial power. Although the battles took place primarily in North America, Asia and the Caribbean, the French invaded the British ruled island of Menorca in 1756.\(^7^6\) This resulted in the Marsh family’s retreat to the garrison of Gibraltar. After just two months on Gibraltar, Marsh determined to sail to England in pursuit of her fiancée. Marsh was captured at sea on 8 July 1756 and was held captive in Morocco until November of that year.


\(^7^2\) See NA, SP 71/20, Part 1, fols 65, 67, 69. One letter, written by James Crisp to Sir Edward Hawke, Commander-in-Chief of the British Fleet on 16 August 1756 refers to the ‘young lady’ held captive with them.

\(^7^3\) Although the original is in private ownership an online version is available. Colley, *The Ordeal*, p. 307. ‘Diary of George Marsh’, Biographies of Interesting People www.jjhc.info/marshgeorge1800diary.html .

\(^7^4\) For a comprehensive and detailed biography see Colley, *The Ordeal*. Marsh’s twenty-first birthday occurred during her captivity.

\(^7^5\) Marsh was briefly engaged to Captain John Towry, before which Mr. James Crisp had paid his addresses to her but he was not considered a suitable match, although ‘a fine handsome man and rich’, George Marsh, *Diary*. See Colley, *The Ordeal*, p. 88. Marsh herself refrained from disclosing these prior ‘addresses’ and merely described Crisp as a friend of her family, ‘going a Passenger’, Marsh, vol. 1, p. 4.

\(^7^6\) The British had taken possession of Menorca in 1713 under the Treaty of Utrecht.
The historical background to the capture of Marsh’s vessel, involved the failed British embassy of Vice Admiral Sir Hyde Parker (1714-1782/3) to Marrakesh in July 1756. Hyde Parker’s mission was to negotiate a treaty with Morocco and to redeem British captives. On entering the palace of Sidi Mohammad, the acting ruler, Hyde Parker, ‘dressed quite en deshabille’ failed to remove his hat or his boots and spurs and sat down disrespectfully in his presence. He behaved with ‘undisguised effrontery’ and addressed Sidi Mohammed ‘with an air of scornful pride’. To add insult to injury Hyde Parker rejected Sidi Mohammad’s request for a British consul to be stationed permanently in Morocco. As a reprisal for this insulting and undignified behaviour, Morocco embarked on a further spate of captive-taking.

Between 1756 and 1758 four hundred Britons were held captive at different times in Morocco. In late July, 1756, the Ann, a small 150 ton ship, travelling in convoy en route to London, lost its way in thick fog and was seized by a twenty-gun Moroccan cruiser with more than 130 armed men on board. Bekkaoui has unearthed, and translated, a reference to the capture of Marsh’s vessel in a contemporary record. An entry in the diary of Georg Høst, the Danish Consul reveals that Mohammed […] took possession as a good prize of an English ship, which his corsairs had captured, claiming that the passport was not in order. The passengers, (some merchants and a woman) and the crew had to walk from Salé to Marrakech where they were detained as slaves. But when an English man-of-war was sent from Gibraltar to demand their release, this was not denied them.

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77 Colley, *The Ordeal*, p. 59. The British had supplied arms to the Sultan’s ‘rebellious subjects’ on Morocco’s northern coast. At this time George II was king of England and Abdallah IV was in his sixth reign in Morocco, based in Fez.
78 Hyde Parker was fifth baronet and a naval officer. See *ODNB*.
79 Colley, *Captives*, p. 126. Sidi Mohammed ben Abdallah (c. 1710-1790) was viceroy at Marrakech. He was sultan from 7 November 1757 to 1790 (Mohammed III).
81 Colley, *Captives*, p. 126.
83 Colley, *The Ordeal*, p. 50. On board the Ann were ten crewmen, an Irish trader and his son, James Crisp and Elizabeth Marsh, p. 50.
In her narrative Marsh reveals that Sidi Mohammad informed herself and the other captives that their ship was taken because of the ‘insolent Behaviour’ of Captain Hyde Parker, ‘having treated him in a very disrespectful and rude manner’.

On 7 December Marsh was safely back in Gibraltar and upon learning of her failed engagement, Marsh married Mr. James Crisp. They returned to England, had two children and settled into domesticity until they found themselves bankrupt in the mid-1760s. George Marsh comments unsympathetically on Crisp’s misfortune: ‘as he and his wife were both too much inclined to ape the fashion and expenses of people of very great fortune in all kinds of entertainments and ruinous follies he became in about fourteen years a bankrupt’. Crisp was forced to seek work in India, at which point Marsh wrote and published her captivity narrative to raise money for herself and her two children. Marsh joined Crisp in 1771 and throughout the 1770s she travelled around India. She made one last trip to England in the late 1770s but returned to India where she died in 1785. Her uncle described her as a ‘handsome and very engaging woman with great abilities’. For a woman of her class and educational background with no independent income, Marsh travelled widely and recorded her experiences.

**Literary Influences**

Marsh was unique in being the first English woman captive to publish an account of Barbary captivity but she was reticent in revealing her identity outright and chose to publish anonymously. Musgrave identified the author and vouched for the narrative’s veracity in a handwritten insertion in his copy of her text:

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85 Elizabeth Marsh, *The Female Captive: A Narrative of Facts, which happened in Barbary, in the Year 1756* (London: C. Bathurst, 1769), 1:28. All further references will be given in the text unless accompanied by a footnote.

86 Burrish Crisp (1762-1811) and Elizabeth Maria Crisp (1764-1838). Elizabeth married George Shee, 1st Baronet of Dunmore, in 1783. Their son George, born in Calcutta in 1785, was 2nd Baronet of Dunmore, Justice of the Peace and Deputy Lieutenant and High Sheriff for Galway, Ireland.

87 Marsh, *Diary*.

88 She discovered she had breast cancer in 1784, had a mastectomy in 1785 and died later that year on 30 April. She is buried in the old English Cemetery, Park Street, Calcutta (Kolkata), India but her tomb no longer exists.

89 Marsh, *Diary*.

90 The first American captivity narrative written by a woman was Mary Rowlandson’s *The Soveraignty and Goodness of God* published in 1682. Mary Rowlandson née White (c.1637-1711) was born in Somerset, England. She migrated with her family to Salem, Massachusetts, and later moved to Lancaster. In 1676 the settlement was attacked by Native Americans and she was held captive for three months until ransomed. See Katheryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, *Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives* (New York: Penguin, 1998).
The Lady’s maiden name was Marsh. She married Mr. Crisp, as related in the following Narrative. But he having failed in business went to India, when she remained with her father, then Agent Victualler\(^{91}\) at Chatham, during which she wrote and published these little Volumes. On her husband’s success in India, she went thither to him. The Book having, as it is said, being bought up by the Lady’s friends, is become very scarce.\(^{92}\)

There were eighty-three subscribers to the book, so Marsh’s identity would have been known to those in her immediate circle.\(^{93}\) The practice of publishing by subscription became popular in the eighteenth century.\(^{94}\) Before 1701 there were less than a hundred books published by subscription but a century later there were between 2000 and 3000.\(^{95}\) Publishing by subscription was a way of gaining financial backing and a common practice for those in need of money. It was particularly useful for women from a disadvantaged social class.\(^{96}\) The subscribers’ names were printed, usually alphabetically or by rank, at the front of the book. Methods of payment varied but usually subscribers paid half in advance when subscribing and the remainder when the book was published. For Marsh, gaining subscriptions would have entailed approaching mainly friends and acquaintances. Many of the subscribers were navy personnel, associates of her father, Milbourne Marsh. Twenty-six of the subscribers were women, four of whom bought two copies each.\(^{97}\) Multiple subscriptions were generally to further support the author’s endeavour and indicated a lucrative profit before publication.\(^{98}\) Subscribing to multiple copies also publicly demonstrated the subscriber’s wealth. Marsh’s brother, John Marsh, bought eight copies and a Mr. Charles Jackson took six. Her friend and correspondent, Mr. Court, purchased four copies as did Mr. John Escot and Mr. William Smith. In some cases husbands and wives, or a whole family bought multiple copies. Governor Boyd and his wife bought two copies each, while General Leighton and his family

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91 An agent victualler supervised the management and provision of victuals for the navy.
92 Bekkaoui, 'Introduction', p. 3.
93 Colley, *The Ordeal*, p. 146.
94 Publishing by subscription, in various forms, dates back to the mid-sixteenth century.
97 Mrs. Boyd; Mrs. Coote; Mrs. Kettle; Mrs. Pinfold. None of the women’s Christian names are given.
98 O’Flaherty, p. 125.
purchased five.\textsuperscript{99} Governor Charles Pinfold’s family bought four.\textsuperscript{100} Given that many of Marsh’s acquaintances subscribed to, and bought the book, Marsh wrote in the knowledge that her public testimony would be interpreted, judged, condemned or condoned by those closest to her. While the fact that her friends and family subscribed to her book implies that they approved of her publishing her account, the fact that the book was quickly ‘bought up’ and became scarce suggests that they may have been equally eager to suppress it.

In her preface Marsh clearly defined its literary function and her motives for publication. She pitched her narrative at ‘the Generous, the Tender, and the Compassionate’.\textsuperscript{101} Although she clearly described it as a ‘Narrative of Facts’ she also called it ‘an innocent Amusement’, the purchase of which would provide the reader with happiness ‘for a leisure Hour’ (Marsh, 1769, 1: sig A4v). Marsh stated that she did not intend to add to the ‘trite, dry narratives, as far remote from Humour and Spirit, as they are from Truth and Probability’ of which there was an ample supply (1: sig A3r). Marsh instead highlighted the personal emphasis of her text: ‘The Subject of these Volumes is a Story of real Distress, unembellished by any Ornaments of Language, or Flights of Fancy’ (1: A3r). Emphasising that this is a ‘bold attempt’, Marsh hinted at the suspicion and hardship she faced after her return from captivity: ‘the Misfortunes I met with in Barbary have been more than equalled by those I have since experienced, in this Land of Civil and Religious Liberty’ (1: A3v-A4r).

In the aftermath of captivity, writing may have proved cathartic. Marsh drafted several versions of her captivity experience before publishing thirteen years after her release. For publication Marsh made some slight changes and additions to the manuscript version, even though she claimed to present an unpolished and unrevised account:

I rather chusing to present to the World with all its Imperfections on its Head, than to lose its Simplicity by trying to polish it; Reflections, however unadorned, when made at the Time of Suffering, being observed to make always a deeper Impression on Minds endowed with Sensibility, than those

\textsuperscript{99}Governor Robert Boyd (bap 1710 -1794) was made Lieutenant Governor of Gibraltar in 1768. During the siege of Minorca in 1756 he heroically attempted to reach Sir John Byng’s fleet and was later called as a witness in Byng’s court-martial. See \textit{ODNB}. General Francis Leighton (1696-1773) was made Lieutenant General of the 32\textsuperscript{nd} Regiment of Foot in 1759 and General in 1772.

\textsuperscript{100}Charles Pinfold was Governor of Barbados from 1756 to 1766.

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{The Female Captive}, Preface, vol I, A4r.
which the Imagination forms in the Hours of Ease and Tranquillity (1: A3r-A3v).

Claims to artlessness, simplicity and self-reflection were standard literary conventions, particularly of the novel. Marsh’s reflections on the past were influenced by events in the present, which like her time in captivity was also a ‘time of suffering’. Her reasons for publishing in 1769 were financial and she wrote for the popular market. Colley claims that when re-writing in 1769 Marsh ‘converted her captive experiences into high drama and romance’. The threat posed by the might of the Ottomans and the spectre of Islam had diminished considerably by the 1760s, allowing authors to romanticize their accounts of them. In writings about Islam and Barbary a more confident and dismissive tone develops.

Marsh’s text contains elements of the adventure story, travel literature, captivity narrative, the sentimental novel and romance. Marsh was clearly influenced by novels of sensibility such as Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740) and *Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady* (1748) which portray female heroines suffering trials and ordeals to maintain their virtue. Borrowing from the sentimental and epistolary genres, Marsh included letters in her narrative to vouch for the ultimate preservation of her good character against adversity. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s *Turkish Embassy Letters* (published posthumously in 1763), may also have been an influence on Marsh. The inclusion of a map of Morocco indicates that *The Female Captive* was marketed as a travel account, but Marsh does not include large chunks of historical and geographical details as other travellers and captives customarily did (Figure 14). She focused exclusively on her own lived experience. It is, as she emphasizes, a narrative written by herself, about herself. She is the heroine at the centre of the text, a protagonist around whom dramatic events occur.

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102 Her husband had gone bankrupt and was forced to travel to India in the hope of breaking into ‘private trade in Asia, focusing on some of the commodities he knew best, textiles, salt and precious stones’, Colley, *The Ordeal*, p. 169.
103 Colley, *Captives*, p. 127.
104 Colley, ‘Narrative’, p. 150. The Seven Years War (1756-1753) increased Britain’s imperial power. At the Battle of Plassey in 1757 Britain won a decisive victory over Bengal, furthering its colonial expansion. See *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1914*, ed. by Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
105 Colley, ‘Narrative’, p. 150.
The Female Captive

Unlike voluntary female travellers, such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who was ‘charmed with the thoughts of going into the East’, Elizabeth Marsh clearly did not choose to travel to Morocco.\(^\text{106}\) She was not fired with the enthusiasm and spirit of adventure evident in Lady Mary’s letters, but rather a sense of horror and distress permeates her narrative. After being captured by a ‘Sallee Rover’ Marsh effectively dramatized the situation. She furnished a vivid account of her forced arrival in Salé, Morocco, revealing how frightening and intimidating it was for a lone female captive to suddenly find herself thrust before thousands of shouting Moors ‘halloing like so many Infernals’.\(^\text{107}\) Adhering to principles of sensibility Marsh related how the sound of celebratory drums ‘and a Sort of Music’ heralding the arrival of the Christian captives struck her ‘with the greatest Terrors imaginable’ and her ‘Spirits were violently agitated’.\(^\text{108}\) The Critical Review laconically noted that her reception on arrival in Barbary ‘could not be very agreeable to a British lady’.\(^\text{109}\) On the two-mile march to be inspected by the governor of Salé, the captives were accompanied by musicians with instruments that she found ‘more dismal than a Funeral Drum;

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\(^{106}\) Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 115. Lady Mary, as an aristocrat and wife of a diplomat, travelled in style with her own feather-bed to lie on and a large contingent of twenty liveried servants, p. 120.

\(^{107}\) *The Female Captive*, 1: 23-4. Salé is on the Atlantic coast.

\(^{108}\) *Ibid.*, 1:19-20. ‘Spirits was a psychological and physiological referent, always indicating mood or body state [...] the state of one’s spirits were a sensitive register of one’s disposition and response to the world’, G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 18.

\(^{109}\) *The Critical Review*, p. 212.
and the insults of the Populace were intolerable’. In contrast, when the Dutch captive ter Meetelen was captured she claimed to have found music a comfort: ‘I pacified my heart and diverted myself as long as I was on the corsair vessel by playing on my cithara and singing […] the captain sent me a negro with his instrument […] we played, each on their instrument, and we sang, I in Spanish and he in Turkish’ (Bekkaoui, 2011, 68). Marsh conveyed how the strangeness of the sounds, the alien music and the jeering of the crowd unnerved her. Along the way the captives were entertained with ‘a confused Noise of Women’s Voices’ from the roof-tops, which alarmed Marsh when she was told it was a ‘Testimony of Joy on the Arrival of a Female Captive’. The local inhabitants, whom she found hostile and threatening, are described interchangeably as infernals, infidels or monsters, and are part of an unruly rabble or suffocating mob which encapsulates the captives. Her use of the word ‘infernals’, suggested to the reader that Marsh had arrived in hell. Marsh was spared the indignation of being sold in the market place but was exposed to the scrutiny of crowds of curious onlookers on her arrival in Salé. She was a novel spectacle for ‘the lower Sort of People’ who came to view her in her place of confinement. During her harrowing journey inland from Salé to Marrakech, on a donkey with a makeshift saddle, she was tormented by the behaviour of ‘wild Arabs’ who were ‘resolutely determined to be very mischievous’. With every one striving to get a look at her, Marsh was self-conscious and uncomfortable (1: 99). Reversing the customary trope of the Christian male gazing at unfamiliar foreign women, it is Marsh, the exotic Christian woman who is observed as a foreign spectacle.

Through dangerous deserts, over high mountains and down steep precipices Marsh emphasizes her remoteness from civilisation as she traversed territory where, she imagined, no ‘human Foot had ever been’ (1: 87). As this was clearly a recognised and well-trodden caravan route familiar to her captors, Marsh’s claim to pioneer uncharted territory was exaggerated in order to alert her readers to her utter

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110 The Female Captive, 1:25. For a contemporary description of Salé see Moüette, pp. 10-13.
111 The Female Captive, 1:25. John Windus also noted these women on the tops of the houses, A Journey to Mequinez, p. 31.
112 Ibid., 1:37. In Salé she was confined in a room with a gallery at the top, at the end of a long dark passage, and a strong guard at the door, 2:27.
113 Ibid., 1:111. Marsh claimed the journey was three hundred miles but it is approximately 198 miles.
114 Although their circumstances were very different, this is reminiscent of Lady Mary’s jaunt around Adrianople with the French Ambassadress, which drew a vast number of spectators ‘to see what they had never seen, nor ever would see again’. See Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, The Turkish Embassy Letters [1763], ed. by Malcolm Jack (London: Virago, 1994), p. 67.
isolation and dislocation. Each mile distanced her from all she was familiar with. The extreme harshness of Marsh’s arduous journey in soaring temperatures, and the distances traversed must not be underestimated. John Whitehead, captured in 1691, described the fatal hardships he encountered on a similar march to Meknes:

We were necessitated to drink of any stinking Pool of Rain Water that we could meet with; and then after the Fatigue of our Journey every Day, sleeping in the Night abroad under unwholesome Dews that fell, and sometimes, Rain made us all sick: some of an Ague & Feaver, and some of a Feaver alone.

After eventually arriving in Meknes the men succumbed to illness, one by one, until after ten weeks Whitehead was the lone survivor of the party. The high fatality rate gives an indication of the treacherous conditions Marsh had to withstand and her fortitude in surviving against challenging odds. Throughout her journey Marsh suffered under searing temperatures and was exposed to wild animals and intimidating individuals. In spite of these hardships she made an effort to present herself as an observant, scientific reporter: ‘I made as many Observations as I could, in my confined Situation, without any Books, the Want of which I greatly regretted’ (1: 114). She fluctuated between being a powerless victim, a curious attraction and an assertive mediator.

Marsh’s narrative is structured as a series of humiliations and frightening episodes. For her entrance to Marrakech she was forced to display herself in her finest clothes so that she and the other captives might appear ‘above the Vulgar’.

An undercurrent of the text is Marsh’s fear of being socially disparaged for being alone and unchaperoned with various men. She was embarrassed by being compelled to share a mule with fellow captive James Crisp as they faced the twenty thousand-

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115 Adam Elliot, who was held captive in Morocco in 1670, described his deplorable journey to Salé through a desolate and forlorn country, barren and dry where he could not see ‘any footsteps of Husbandry or Civility’, Elliot, A Modest Vindication of Titus Oates, p. 5.
116 There are no biographical details for John Whitehead. He was ‘supra-cargo’ (officer in charge of cargo) on board a ship sailing from Carrickfergus in Northern Ireland, bound for Teneriffe. He spent eight years in captivity before being ransomed. At the request of physician and collector Hans Sloane, Whitehead wrote an account of his experience. It was never published. Nabil Matar has included Whitehead’s narrative ‘John Whitehead: His Relation of Barbary’, as an appendix in Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689, pp. 177-89. The original manuscript is in the British Library, MS Sloan, 90.
117 By contrast, ter Meetelen describes nothing about her journey to Meknes, does not supply any details of the landscape, nor does she complain of fatigue or the heat of the summer sun.
118 Nussbaum, p. 127.
119 The Female Captive, 1:118. Marsh says the clothes she put on were ‘rich and new’, p. 74.
strong jeering multitude that fired their muskets as they passed. Colley suggests that for Marsh this would have been reminiscent of the ‘charivari or rough music processions’ which were inflicted throughout Europe on promiscuous or adulterous couples. Marsh would have been familiar with images, such as that in Jean Dumont’s *A New Voyage to the Levant* (1696), of immoral women paraded as shameful spectacles before accusing mobs (Figure 15).

![Figure 15. The Punishment of an Harlot in Turkey. Jean Dumont, *A New Voyage to the Levant* (London, 1696)](image)

Marsh’s undignified exposure in this dismal procession would have reinforced for her the precariousness of her predicament. Thomas Pellow, taken captive in 1716, described a similar journey from Salé to Meknes, as a bewildered eleven-year-old forced to share a donkey with his uncle and taunted by threatening crowds:

> about a Mile before we reach’d it [Meknes] we were commanded to get off our Belts, and to take off our English shoes, and to put on yellow Pumps, […] and at our Entrance to the city we were met and surrounded by vast

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120 François Pidou de Saint Olon (1646-1720) French ambassador from Louis XIV to Moulay Ismail in 1693, observed Christian slaves being taunted on their entrance to Meknes: ‘and when any Christians are seen at Mickeness, they are sure to be expos’d to the Curses and Hootings of the whole Town, and particularly of the young Fry, some of which follow them merely to bellow out a volley of abusive words, or to throw Stones at them’, François Pidou de Saint-Olon, *The Present State of the Empire of Morocco with a Faithful Account of the Manners, Religion, and Government of that People* (London, 1695), pp. 50-1.

Crouds of them, offering us the most vile Insults, and they could scarce be restrained from knocking us on the Head; [...] pulling our hair, and giving us many severe Boxes [...] which signified in English that we were Hereticks and knew neither God nor Mahomet.\(^{122}\)

In both cases the captors were eager to exhibit the Christian captives in good condition to the crowds of curious onlookers. And the spoils could be lucrative – a young boy or an attractive female would achieve premium returns. Pellow related that Moulay Ismail paid fifty ducats each for the fifty-two captives in his group ‘but out of this was paid back again one third, and a tenth as a customary Tribute’.\(^{123}\)

Upon arrival in Marrakech, Marsh and Crisp were taken to a crumbling castle where she was left alone with him for hours to reflect on their miserable fate. Despite the implications of this close confinement on her virtuous reputation she included it, thereby enhancing her narrative with elements of Gothic romance.

**Virtuous Heroine**

Drawing on the conventions of sentimental fiction, Marsh presented herself as a defenceless heroine and created an element of suspense in her narrative by stressing to the reader the uncertainty of her fate. This ‘uncertainty’ centred on her position as a vulnerable, virginal, young woman in a society allegedly renowned for its predilection for just that commodity. Marsh’s readers would have assumed that as an unmarried woman travelling alone she was in imminent danger of bodily violation and spiritual conversion.\(^{124}\) Marsh added intrigue to her narrative by accentuating her helplessness in the face of the cruelty and ‘dangers [her] Sex was exposed to in Barbary’ (1: 18). Ter Meetelen also emphasised the sexual threat she was exposed to: ‘I was not afraid of being killed by them, but what terrified me most was being

\(^{122}\) Pellow, *The History of the Long Captivity*, pp. 12-13. Pellow never forgot this traumatic event as he recalled it twenty-three years later when cheering crowds lined the streets of his home town to welcome him back from his captivity, pp. 387-88. The captive Adam Elliot described how he and his fellow captives were forced ‘like a drove of Sheep’ through the streets of Salé accompanied by hundreds of ‘idle rascally people and roguish Boys’ who welcomed them with ‘horrid barbarous Shouts somewhat like the Irish hubbub’, p. 6.

\(^{123}\) Pellow, p. 13. Moulay Ismail profited from corsairing by way of taxes, tribute and slaves he could use for his building enterprises. He would also collect ransoms from those redeemed. Jacques Philippe Laugier de Tassy confirmed that in Algiers: ‘the Sale of Slaves is very profitable to the State; besides which none can be ransomed without paying ten per Cent of the price of their Ransom and a duty is also laid upon their Importation and Exportation’, *A Compleat History of the Piratical States of Barbary*, trans. by Joseph Morgan (London, 1750), p. 221. Translation of *Histoire du Royaume d’Alger* (Amsterdam, 1724).

\(^{124}\) Maria ter Meetelen was travelling with her husband when captured. Lady Mary was also a married woman when she travelled to the Levant.
 ravished by them. I would rather perish than fall into their hands’. Sexual violation was considered an almost inevitable component of female captivity. Conversion for both male and female captives was linked to sexual defilement and inconstancy.

For female captives, eager to reaffirm their virtue and steadfastness, death was claimed to be preferable to having their bodies ravished and jeopardising their souls. Samuel Richardson’s sentimental victim, Clarissa Harlowe, dies as a result of the mental anguish caused by incessant assaults on her virtue. She welcomes death in the knowledge that her integrity is intact and her virtue uncompromised. Marsh aligned herself with the sensitive maidens of contemporary novels and intermittently shed floods of tears, trembled, fainted and swooned. The outward physical display of feeling and sentiment was considered evidence of exceptional virtue in the young woman exhibiting such signs. As her narrative progresses Marsh is invariably in a melancholy condition or in a state of continuous dread with her ‘Spirits’ in turmoil. In the face of ‘dreadful Apprehensions’ Marsh also invoked ‘Heaven to put an End to [her] Days’ (Marsh, 1769, 1: 85). The ultimate realisation of sensibility and proof of genuine virtue was a willingness to accept death. Marsh, who claimed to be ‘endued with a superior Share of Sensibility’, (1:55) adopted the role of sentimental heroine to defend her virtue and prove her innocence.

Before being summoned to see her captor, Sidi Mohammad, Marsh overheard a clandestine conversation between the interpreter ‘Don Pedro, a Menorcan slave’ and James Crisp, suggesting she pose as a married woman:

the Danger your fair Companion is exposed to gives me inexpressible Concern […] how very necessary it is for her Safety, that you should pass for her Husband. I cannot be unacquainted with his Temper and Inclinations; and such […] is his despotic Power, that, if she is at all preserved from being detained in the Seraglio, it must be by the Means above proposed (1: 71-3).

Marsh was shocked ‘beyond Expression’ as, in either scenario, her virtue would be compromised, or undermined. Convention dictated strict behavioural rules for unmarried women. A woman who was too familiar with a man before marriage became an outcast and diminished her chances of securing a husband. In the

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125 Bekkaoui, White Women Captives, p. 66.
126 Richardson’s heroine Pamela consistently portrayed overt sensibility: ‘I struggled, and trembled and was so benumbed with terror […] I sobbed and cried most sadly’, Pamela; Or, Virtue Rewarded ed. by Peter Sabor (London, Penguin Books, 2003), p. 55.
128 Spacks, p. 27.
seraglio she could face physical and spiritual violation, but posing as Crisp’s wife would have its own negative implications on her virtue, arousing suspicion and innuendo from her fellow captives and those at home. Left with little choice, Marsh submitted to the subterfuge, once Crisp assured her of his honour, and that ‘no Conduct of his should ever give [her] the least Cause of Offence’ (1: 76-7). The Critical Review considered this strategy worthy of note:

It was thought advisable for this lady to pass for the wife of one of the gentlemen who had been taken prisoner with her, in order to prevent any disagreeable applications from the emperor of Morocco; who otherwise, it was apprehended, would be desirous of retaining her in his seraglio.129

This deception caused Marsh as much anguish as her physical captivity or threatened violation.130 To reduce any sexual innuendo, Crisp is referred to interchangeably as her friend, her brother, a man of honour and a Christian. He is portrayed as malleable, helpless and voiceless, with no role in the narrative other than his usefulness to Marsh. Whereas the primary objective of male captivity accounts is to reaffirm their Christian identity, Marsh’s narrative has an underlying sub-plot focusing on her acquisition of a suitable husband.

Although Marsh claimed to be worried for her reputation, much of her narrative reads like the busy entertainment schedule of a popular eighteenth-century socialite. While she was held captive in four different Moroccan towns, Salé, ‘New Salee’,131 Marrakech and Safi, she was allowed relative freedom to sojourn with Christian merchants, who were stationed at various trading posts, and to whom she was a welcome distraction. She was the centre of attention in several gentlemen’s company, received ‘invitations to dine’ and was ‘entertained with as much Elegance as such a Place could admit’.132 She was happy to be ‘received’ by merchants of all nations and was miserable when ‘deprived of the Satisfaction of the Gentlemen’s Company’.133 Most of all she was thankful for the ‘satisfaction of being with

129 Critical Review, p. 213.
131 The capital of Rabat was known as New Salee. It is situated at the mouth of the river Bou Regreg on the opposite shore to Salé.
132 The Female Captive, 1:64-5. Ter Meetelen was shown overwhelming friendship by the redemptionist Fathers in Salé because she was ‘of their own faith’, but she was unimpressed by the merchants who visited them and whose only interest in her was to ascertain her religious persuasion. Bekkaoui, White Women Captives, p. 69.
133 Ibid., 1:49. Marsh encountered French, Danish, Swedish, Irish and English merchants in the various towns in which she was held captive. Fifty years earlier Thomas Pellow also mentioned the
Christians’ (1: 63) or being ‘under the roof of those who professed the same Faith as [herself]’ (2: 75). Marsh did not disclose the names of these gentlemen but Musgrave has revealed the identities of most of them. Monsieur Ray, a French merchant in New Salee, provided hospitality and altered a saddle to make Marsh’s onward journey more comfortable. A convivial Irish merchant, Mr. Andrews, provided lodgings and sustenance for the captives in his house in Safi. Marsh enjoyed the friendship of Mr. Court, an English merchant: ‘his conversation being always new and improving; and Providence was particularly kind in indulging me, in that Country, with the Acquaintance of so amiable a Man’. It is evident that her company made a lasting impression on Mr. Court as he later wrote that she engrossed much of his thoughts (2: 104). Marsh was not reticent about including his letters in her narrative. These dalliances with amiable men would have done little to rescue her reputation or her beleaguered virtue from accusation and suspicion.

Despite her desire to vindicate herself in print, Marsh’s narrative raises more concerns about her integrity than it solves. Contradicting her claim of being terrified for her virtue, Marsh described her encounters with the ‘elegant’ Sidi Mohammad in terms of courtship rather than a forced encounter with an alleged sexual predator with the power to retain her services in his seraglio. On her first meeting in Sidi Mohammad’s palace in Marrakech, she was received by him ‘with great attention’ but, with her sunburnt face and riding-habit, she was conscious of her own dishevelled appearance (1: 123). In his diary George Marsh recorded that Sidi Mohammad enthused that although Marsh was married she was ‘very pretty and would be remarkably so, when she grew fatter (he being very fond of fat women)’. For her second meeting with the Prince, Marsh went to some effort with her appearance and apparently aimed to impress. She dressed ‘in a Suit of Cloaths, and

kindness of the French and Irish merchants in Salé who provided him with refreshments in his ‘weak and disconsolate Condition’, Pellow, p. 10.

134 Andrews shared this house with his partner whom Musgrave identified as M. Conneler. Colley suggests this man was Demetrio Colety, a Greek trader. Colley, *The Ordeal*, p. 85.

135 The Female Captive, 2:52-3. In a letter to Marsh, Mr. Court described himself as ‘a Barbarian […] one who has been banished for some Years, from every thing that is polite, and resided in the southern Parts of Africa, where there is nothing to be met with but Brutality and Insolence’, 2: 100-01.

136 In a rather condemnatory note George Marsh adds ‘indeed she was rather too much inclined to be fat’. Sara Reid suggests that in the early modern period in England some plumpness was considered desirable in women but there was also a link between being fat and being sexually incontinent. Sara Reid is currently researching what it meant to be an overweight woman in the Renaissance and Restoration periods. See www.rensoc.org.uk/profile/sara.reid.
Hair was done up in the Spanish Fashion’. In contrast, when ter Meetelen went before the ‘king’ she dressed in shabby rags and an ‘old tattered nappy on my head, whose rags fluttered about my ears and through whose holes my hair came out’, to make herself look ‘homely’ rather than young and attractive. Marsh claimed to be aware of the dangers to women and fearful for her virtue, but then beautified herself for the Prince’s benefit and appeared to be unaware that anything was amiss in her behaviour. This adds a thread of underlying intrigue to the narrative, and her ardent appreciation of the ‘elegant Figure’ of the Prince is romantically suggestive:

The Prince was tall, finely shaped, of a good Complexion, and appeared to be about Five and twenty. He was dressed in a loose Robe of fine Muslin, with a Train of at least two Yards on the Floor; and under that was a Pink Sattin Vest, buttoned with Diamonds: He had a small Cap of the same Sattin as his Vest, with a Diamond Button: He wore Bracelets on his Legs, and Slippers wrought with Gold: His Figure, all together, was rather agreeable, and his Address polite and easy (Marsh, 1769, 2: 18-19).

Young, tall with a fine physique, a ‘good complexion’, and a gracious and affable manner, he resembles a European aristocrat rather than the stereotypical threatening, ‘black’ tyrants portrayed in male accounts. Francis Brooks described Moulay Ismaïl as being as ‘black as an Infernal Imp’ with a volatile temper. Marsh found the prince ‘agreeable’ and her description of his attire and mannerisms gives him an unthreatening quality. She created a dashing hero-like character and presented the encounter as an attempted seduction as he tempted her with promises of lavish rarities and curiosities. Her attitude to him is an ambiguous mixture of attraction, fear and confusion.

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137 The Female Captive, 2:15. In Spain in this period a mantilla, usually of lace or silk, was draped over a high comb and worn over the head and shoulders. See Victoria Sherrow, Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2006), p. 2.
138 Bekkaoui, White Women Captives, p. 74. Moulay Abdallah reigned as Sultan of Morocco on six occasions between 1729 and 1757. Upon her arrival in Meknes ter Meetelen and her husband were called before the sultan. She described her preparation for the encounter: ‘Before going to the king, the captain had restored to me among other things some of my silver and gold jewellery as well as a ring with a ruby and two diamonds, together with some hair needles and pins with precious stones, because he believed that the king would retain me and that I would enjoy the king’s favour and so would recommend him to him’. The meeting was uneventful and they were merely sent away, p. 69.
139 Marsh estimated his age at about twenty-five but as records indicate he was born c. 1710 he would have been in his mid-forties in 1756.
140 Brooks, Barbarian Cruelty, p. 58. The anonymous author of A Description of the Nature of Slavery among the Moors (1721) alleged that Moulay Ismail ‘often changes Colour, according to the Passion that is then predominant in him; For Joy makes him look somewhat whiter than ordinary; but in his Choler, which often transports him, he turns black, and his Eyes are blood-red’, p. 27. Choler was one of the four humours of early physiology supposed to cause irascibility of temper. See OED.
Harem visits
In contrast to the appealing figure of Sidi Mohammad, the women observed by Marsh are described as unattractive, slovenly, unfeminine and threatening. In Salé at the home of the Captain of the Port she was shown into the ‘Apartment of his Ladies’, which she does not comment on, but singled out just one anonymous woman for mention:

She was very tall and stout, with a broad flat Face, very dark Complexion, and long black Hair; she wore a dress resembling a Clergyman’s Gown,\textsuperscript{141} made of Muslin and buttoned on the Neck like the Collar of a Shirt, which reached her Feet. (1: 39)

The description of this woman is far removed from the refined, aesthetically pleasing beauties described by Western authors in their erotic imaginings.\textsuperscript{142} There is nothing suggestively sensuous or titillating in this androgynous, religiously-attired figure, impenetrably draped from head to toe with not an inch of flesh to be seen. The ‘Clergyman’s Gown’ is not salaciously evocative nor does it invite curiosity but rather negates any further investigation or discussion. Marsh distanced herself from the woman by emphasising her dark, unappealing, foreign features. She later described another woman in the sultan’s harem as a ‘large Woman, but low in Stature, of a sallow Complexion, thick-lipped and had a broad flat Face, with black Eyes, the Lashes whereof were painted of a deep Red’.\textsuperscript{143} The other women in her

\textsuperscript{141} This could be a takchita which was worn on special occasions, or a kaftan. It could also be a djellba, a long loose fitting traditional Berber robe, although this is usually of a heavier material such as wool. Writing in the late sixteenth century, Nicolas de Nicolay described the attire of the wives of Turkes or Moores in Algiers: ‘for they weare a greate Bernuche made of a blanket of white, blacke or violet colour, which covereth theyr whole body and the head, p. 8. John Windus described the dress of the poorest Moors as a loose garment called ‘a Gelebia, it is made of a course and thick wrought woollen Stuff, without sleeves’, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{142} Some male travellers commented negatively on North African women. Busnot described Moulay Ismaïl’s favourite, Sultana Zidana, as ‘black and of monstrous height and bulk’, \textit{The History of the Reign of Muley Ismael} (London, 1715), p. 50. In his translation of Leo Africanus, John Pory claimed the Libyan women were ‘gross, corpulent and swarthy, small waisted and fat about their Breasts; They are fattest upon their brest and paps, but slender about the girdle’, Pory, \textit{A Geographical Historie of Africa}, p. 21.

\textsuperscript{143} The Female Captive, 2:24. Numerous male authors commented on the make-up used by foreign women. Pory’s translation of Leo Africanus noted that the women of Barbary ‘temper a certaine colour with hens-dung and saffron, wherewithall they paint a little round spot on the bals of their cheeks, about the bredth of a French crowne. Likewise betweene their eye-browes they make a triangle: and paint upon their chinnes a patch like unto an olive leaf. Some of them doe paint their eye-browes [...] these paintings seeme to be great allurements unto lust, whereby the said women thinke themselves more trim and beautifull, p. 25. Lithgow remarked that women throughout Barbary ‘tune also the nayels of their hands and feete to red, accounting it a base thing to see a white naile’, \textit{Totall Discourse}, p. 364. Dumont stated that the women of Turkey, in common with European women, used paint: ‘Their White Paint is a sort of very thick Grease, which I cannot describe, since I had not the curiosity to enquire how they make it. But as for their Red Paint, tis nothing else but
narrative do not undermine Marsh’s central position as heroine. Marsh desisted from creating exaggerated images of women’s beauty or physical attractiveness and did not embellish her account with details of sexual licentiousness or wanton behaviour.

Male authors, unsure of what actually went on in the harem, imaginatively created luxurious scenes of laziness and idleness which they presumed could only lead to lustfulness and depravity. Deprived of opportunities to enter these forbidden spaces, they longed for an illicit glimpse, and fabricated elaborate accounts of the seraglio ladies. In comparison, Marsh’s entry into various harems in Salé and Marrakech seems to be of little consequence to her. Lady Mary displayed a similar lack of enthusiasm upon her first visit to a harem, that of the Grand Vizier’s lady, and ‘was surprised to observe so little magnificence in her house’ and she had found ‘so little diversion in this harem that I had no mind to go into another’. Accustomed to reading highly embellished travellers’ accounts and the fantasies of the East in the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*, the ordinariness of individual harems was not what was expected and failed to live up to fantasies of the imagination. While Lady Mary gazed freely from a comfortable distance, Marsh was threatened by the suffocating proximity of the harem women.

Marsh said nothing about the activities of the women in the harems she was forced to visit, nor of the interior décor of their surroundings. She did not describe opulent scenes with sensuous music or exotic dancers but rather the long corridors and uninteresting rooms are crowded with big, stout, dark-skinned foreboding women. In the sultan’s palace Marsh was brought to a large room ‘crouded with Women, but mostly *Blacks*’ which she was told was a small part of the Seraglio. When offered a chance to inspect this harem further, Marsh was alarmed and ‘would not venture [herself] out of Sight of the Door [she] had entered’ (2: 29). For Jean Dumont, writing in the late seventeenth century, the door of the women’s apartment was a ‘*Ne plus ultra* for every thing that looks like a Man, and the utmost Limit of

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*Cochineel*, prepared with *Cream of Tartar*, and boil’d so long till there remains only a Tenth Part of the Composition. They use it with so much Success that I believe it might serve for *Spanish Vermillion*, and even is, in my Opinion, more natural. They also Paint their Nails Red, but not with *Cochineel*, *A New Voyage to the Levant* (London, 1696), p. 273. In Morocco Thomas Pellow noted the ‘artificial Blackness of her Hands and Feet was laid on by a certain Grass, first made into Powder, and mixed with Water, Alm, and the Juice of Lemons, and is called Ebbenuna’, p. 72. Mouette stated ‘their Face and the inside of their Hands they colour black, or yellow, and their nails red, Paint their Cheeks with Vermillion, and comb their Eyebrows with the Soot of Gauls’, p. 96.

144 Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, pp. 87-88.

145 The Female Captive, 2:29. These ‘Blacks’ are mentioned as a distinct category rather than as women.
the Womens Liberty’. The captive Thomas Pellow was chosen to guard the queen and thirty-eight of the Emperor's concubines. He stressed his privileged position as 'chief Porter of the inner most Door, that is to say, of the Door next without that of the Entrance into the Galleries leading to the several Apartments, and where none could gain Admittance, but through me'. Where male authors were eager to peep behind closed doors to penetrate the inner sanctums and reveal the secrets of the seraglio, Marsh’s only desire was for her freedom. Her fear of losing sight of the door and becoming lost amongst the crowds of nameless women outweighed any desire to investigate or reveal any unknown secrets.

Whereas Lady Mary, as part of an ambassadorial mission, was empowered by her ability to report on a forbidden zone, Marsh felt only fear and humiliation, and her delicate sensibility was offended. While held in Salé she was a novelty for the local officials and underwent a ‘mortifying Examination’ at the houses of their ‘indelicate Women’ (1: 42-3). She made her visit to the ladies quarters of a Moorish official ‘as short as possible’ (1: 62). Marsh, at the mercy of her captors, felt intimidated and anxious as the focus of attention and as an object of curiosity and entertainment. As Marsh observed the women, they gazed back at her:

One of these Ladies drew my attention, as much as I seemed to do her’s […] and was extremely inquisitive and Curious in examining my dress and Person, and was highly entertainted at the Appearance I made.

Marsh does not elaborate on why this particular woman drew her attention or how she differed from the other women. She presented these encounters as troublesome ordeals rather than opportunities to observe a foreign culture, or correct previous authors’ misrepresentations. Marsh described the women as ‘indelicate’, which could refer to what she regards as their cumbersome appearance and coarseness, or it may suggest that their inquisitiveness was of a personal or intrusive nature. Marsh emphatically resisted any attempts to persuade her to adopt their clothing:

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147 Pellow, p. 18.
148 The Female Captive, 1:39. Marsh’s standard everyday items of dress would have included a gown under which was worn a petticoat, stays, and a shift. Waists were corseted and hips enlarged with the use of panniers. Hats with wide brims protected fair complexions from the sun. See John Styles, The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
149 The popular narratives of Mary Velnet and Maria Martin written in the nineteenth century, both contain a scene in which the female captive is assaulted by a violent, sexually deviant Turkish woman who ‘would not unfrequently compel us, for the least offense, to strip ourselves naked, and then stand within a few feet of a large fire, until our bodies were nearly covered with blisters! At other times she
The Ladies made many remarks on my Dress, greatly recommended their own, and importuned me to put it on: but as I would by no Means, oblige them in their Request, they desisted (1: 137).

By contrast, Lady Mary delighted in wearing Ottoman clothing, which she described as liberating. Marsh feared incarceration and assimilation and firmly opposed efforts at acculturation. For Marsh, retaining her Western clothing was a clear marker of her identity. The adoption of Muslim dress would have signified her capitulation.

In comparison to the relative ease with which she met male figures in Morocco, Marsh displayed fear and distrust of the women she was forced to confront. Pushed unwillingly into their midst, Marsh feared being absorbed into the anonymity of the harem and suspected the women of malicious intent. Marsh drank tea served by Sidi Mohammad himself but told the reader she would have declined if it had come from the ladies as she had been cautioned against drinking anything that might be offered to her ‘for very substantial reasons’ (2: 20). This adds a hint of danger and intrigue to her account as the imagined jealousy of harem women was another well entrenched, often repeated stereotype in novels and travel literature. Emanuel D’Aranda (c.1614-c.1686), writing about his captivity in Algiers in 1640, confirmed that the poisoning of people was very common and described it as ‘the African way’:

> which is, to make the composition so, as that it shall not do its effect til sometime after it is administered. This slow operation of the poison causes many […] to renounce the Christian Faith.

Marsh’s reluctance to partake of Muslim female hospitality may have stemmed from a fear of being drugged by jealous, or zealous, women. However, her hyper-vigilance and her ruse of passing as a married woman did not ‘secure her from the machinations of the Morisco lover’ who was allegedly determined to add her to

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150 This is contrary to Lady Mary’s overt zest for the company of Ottoman women and to ter Meetelen’s astute perception of women’s position in Muslim society.
151 She later declined to drink chocolate offered to her by an old female slave, p. 30.
152 See Bon, A Description of the Grand Signour’s Seraglio or Turkish Emperours Court, p. 42.
his harem. As we will see, Marsh’s subsequent inadvertent conversion is instigated by ‘the most agreeable’ of the sultan’s concubines.

Conversion

Women’s conversion to Islam could be facilitated quickly and easily, as Tijana Krstić outlines: ‘one just had to lift one’s right index finger and pronounce the *shahada* [...] in front of two adult Muslim witnesses’. Writing from Istanbul in the sixteenth century, Bon described the collective conversion of new arrivals to the imperial harem:

> These Virgins immediately after their coming into the Seraglio, are made Turks; which is done by using this ceremony only; to hold up their forefinger, and say these words; *law illawheh illaw Allaw, Mahammed resoul Allawh*; that is, *there is no God but God alone, and Mahomet is the messenger of God*.  

No time was wasted and no pompous ceremony required. In *Histoire de la Barbarie et de ses Corsairs* (1649), the Redemptionist priest Pierre Dan confirmed that, unlike the elaborate ceremony of male conversion, there was no comparable ritual for women who converted:

> Concerning women who renege their Faith, there are no equivalent ceremonies, they are obliged to raise their finger and profess the prescribed words, then they are made to don a Mahometan tunic. By this damnable declaration men and women, are in equal measure added to the ranks of the Muslims, that is the faithful, and they are considered as though they had been born Turks; Little thought is given to their instruction or indoctrination into the catechism of their new Religion, it is considered sufficient that the renegades claim to be their kindred, and that their outward appearances attest to this.

Marsh contended that her conversion to Islam occurred unceremoniously without her even realising it had happened. In male authored accounts men were frequently seduced into converting by the allure of Turkish harem women. In Marsh’s case it was also a woman who orchestrated her conversion. This woman was the daughter of an English renegade which should have alerted Marsh to the possible threat to her religious and cultural identity. Despite her determination to keep her wits about her, Marsh was tricked into converting to Islam by this familiar, half-English woman,

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155 Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, p. 22.
156 Bon, p. 36.
157 Dan, *Histoire de la Barbarie*.
158 Richard Hasleton; Mr. T.S; Germain Molüette. See previous chapter.
who was ‘seemingly fond’ of her, and a French boy, acting as interpreter, who failed to assist her in understanding the fatal words she uttered:

I imagined she wanted me to learn their Language […] and concluding that what she said related only to common Conversation, and being desirous of obliging her in Trifles, I imprudently repeated some Words after her, but found, when too late, that I had renounced (though innocently) the Christian Religion, by saying, There is but one God, and Mahomet is his Prophet.\(^{159}\)

Marsh did not don a Mahometan tunic; her outward appearance did not attest to her conversion and the words she repeated were incomprehensible to her. Nevertheless, in her account, once she uttered them there was an atmosphere of jubilation amongst the women. Marsh was shocked to learn that she had been tricked into declaring herself a ‘Mahometan’, but she resolutely and staunchly defended her Christian faith:

I had the Resolution to reply, that it was impossible for me to change my Sentiments in religious Matters; I could easily perceive that he was disgusted with my Answer, from his remaining silent for some Minutes throwing off the Mask he had hitherto worn, he cruelly informed me that I had that very Morning renounced the Christian Faith and turned Mahometan, and that a capital Punishment namely Burning, was, by their Laws, inflicted on all who recanted from or disclaimed their Religion.\(^{160}\)

The Prince, like the tyrant of Gothic novels, revealed his previously hidden, dark, malevolent identity and facing this terrifying spectacle alone, Marsh beseeched Heaven for assistance in her excessive distress and was prepared to give up her life:

I no longer desired to avoid the last Remedy to all my Misfortunes; for Living on the Terms he had proposed, would only add an Accent to my Misery and I therefore thought that the Preservation of my Life did not deserve my Care and Attention. (2: 40-1).

Marsh engaged in religious reflection, appealed to divine Providence, begged the Almighty and invoked heaven for an end to her misery. Tearful on bended knees, she implored her captor’s compassion. Marsh’s virtue, personified in an overt display of distressed sensibility, had a calming effect on the sultan’s conscience. He was apparently so extremely moved by this supplication that he was unable to look at her any longer and ordered that she be allowed to go free (2: 42-3). There are no precedents in male accounts for this sort of clemency or to suggest that this

\(^{159}\) The Female Captive, 2:27. Marsh gives the words in English rather than the Arabic lā ‘ilāha ‘illā-llāh, muhammadur rasūlu-llāh.

\(^{160}\) The Female Captive, 2:37-9. Ter Meetelen also claimed that if she did not convert the king threatened to have her burnt and her flesh torn out of her body with clamps and put her to death through all sorts of tortures. Bekkaoui, White Women Captives, p. 74.
supplicating strategy worked for male captives. Marsh breaks from convention by depicting the sultan in a favourable and sympathetic light with control over his passions. Unlike the villainous despot of other accounts, he shows restraint, moderation and mercy.

What ultimately saved Marsh was not her faith or her righteous manifestation of sensibility, but the fact that she posed as a married woman. She declared to the Prince that she was very happy ‘in a Husband, who was [her] Equal in Rank and Fortune’ and she did not want to change her ‘Situation’. As Marsh was finally allowed to leave the palace ‘black women’ assailed her, tearing her clothes, pulling her hair and chanting: ‘No Christian, but a Moor’ (2: 44). Throughout her ordeal, Marsh posits that it was women that presented the greatest threat to her Christian identity. With body and soul intact, Marsh managed to evade the ‘fatal Consequences’ that could have befallen her (2: 48-9). A day later, Sidi Mohammad commanded all of the ship’s crew and passengers, except Marsh, to meet with him. He ‘set them and Example of Moderation as well as Justice, by permitting [them] to quit his Dominions’ and granted them liberty to proceed on their voyage and issued orders for their journey to Salé (2: 55). As Colley points out, captives held in Morocco at this time usually spent at least a year or more in captivity, until the ruling Sultan entered into negotiations for their release. By contrast, Thomas Pellow spent twenty-three years in captivity in Morocco, from 1715 to 1738; Maria ter Meetelen spent twelve years from 1731 to 1743 and Thomas Troughton spent four years from 1746 to 1750. Marsh and her fellow captives were fortunate, and somewhat unusual, in being freed after a relatively short time, and without a ransom being demanded.  

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161 The Female Captive, 2:22. The captive Richard Hasleton, when enticed to convert by seductive women and immeasurable wealth, professed his undying love and faithfulness to his wife and the vows he made in matrimony. Hasleton, Strange and Wonderful Things, p. 15. To avoid being detained in Istanbul, traveller Thomas Dallam invented a wife and children who were awaiting his return to England. Theodore J. Bent, Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant (1893; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 73.

162 Sidi Mohammad did make some demands in return for setting the captives free. He asked Britain to appoint a full-time consul in Morocco by March 1757. He also expected to receive naval supplies and warned that if ‘peace was not ratified by the Court of England, he should esteem it as a Declaration of War, and order his Cruisers to make Reprisals, and stop the Communication between the Garrison of Gibraltar and his Dominions’, The Female Captive, 2:130.
Homeward Bound
On her homeward journey, from Marrakech to Safi in September 1756, Marsh’s demeanour was initially bright and as she viewed the landscape, as if for the first time, the hostile terrain was transformed. The roads were good and the ‘Prospect of the Country extremely delightful’ (2: 64). The Atlas Mountains were now ‘agreeable Objects’, a salt lake fifty miles from the sea was a ‘great Curiosity’, and a large uncultivated plain, was a ‘charming spot’ (2: 65-8). An ‘Inchanted’ mountain, which deceived travellers as to its proximity, caught her attention more than anything she had previously witnessed (2: 65). At high altitudes with views over the city of Marrakech and the surrounding valleys she described the scene as heavenly. This is in stark contrast to her initial journey through Morocco where she described large tracts of the countryside as ‘affording little worthy of Notice’ (1: 113-14). Interestingly, this positive appreciation of the landscape is not included in her manuscript but may have been added (along with the map) to add to its appeal as a travel account. In Safi, where they remained for fifteen days, they were treated as free people. At this stage, when liberty is almost within her grasp, Marsh added a heightened element of danger and suspense to her narrative. She hid all her letters, which would have revealed her name and her status as a single woman, and was concerned that incoming post from her family might be intercepted. In a further attempt to protect herself and to maintain the pretence of being a married woman she procured a gold ring. She displayed acute apprehension at the thought of being summoned back to the Prince:

I was ever in Dread, that his Imperial Highness would again send for me, having heard from undoubted Authority, that I was not indifferent to him; and though he had discovered great Condescension in permitting me to leave him, when it was in his Power to detain me, yet I knew him to be an absolute Prince; and therefore had reason to be extremely uneasy. (2: 80)

Marsh re-emphasised that she had confronted and narrowly escaped from the claws of a despotic ruler whose arbitrary power could have consigned her to ‘Infamy and

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163 This was a considerably shorter journey than her initial trek from Salé to Marrakech. Safi (Portuguese) or Asfi (Berber) is a town in western Morocco on the Atlantic coast, 152km (approx.) west of Marrakech. It is one of the oldest towns in Morocco and was a large and important seaport until Sidi Mohammad rebuilt the town of Mogador, now Essaouira, which subsequently became the major Moroccan port, servicing Marrakech via a straight road. Commenced in 1766 by Theodore Cornut and using the labour of Christian captives, Essaouira took twelve years to build.

164 Marsh procured the ring from a Swedish captain. Interestingly a contemporary website offering travel advice for women includes a ‘final tip’ for women visiting Morocco: ‘wear a wedding band and invent a husband if you don’t have one’, www.journeywoman.com/ccc/ccc-m2.html.
Perdition here and hereafter’ (2: 103). Yet she also revealed the Prince’s compassionate qualities when she discovered that he was anxious for her health and was unable to sleep being so concerned for her welfare. She highlighted the tenuousness of her freedom as she claimed that the Prince did not dare trust himself to look at her once more ‘lest [he] should be obliged to detain her’ (2: 80). Marsh’s suggestion that she was ‘not indifferent’ to Sidi Mohammad reveals ambiguities in her position. Colley sees this as an ‘extraordinary admission’ and departure from convention. It seems to suggest that Marsh did indeed find Sidi Mohammad attractive and may not have trusted herself to resist temptation, either physical or spiritual, should she be summoned back to his palace. For a woman trying to convince readers of her virtue and constancy it is an unusual sentiment to divulge. However, her strange admission is also likely to relate to her mistrust of a ‘Messsenger’ who visited her in Marrakech and accused her of being a ‘Moor’, and whom she suspected might ‘use every Artifice with his Imperial Highness, in Relation to [her] and would oblige her ‘to remain in his Dominions’ (2: 59-61). Mr. Court gives this ‘dangerous man’ twelve Ducats to buy his silence. Nevertheless, Marsh is greatly distressed by the incident.

Dramatic earthquakes, bad weather and rough seas hindered her departure from Morocco. A mysterious intruder, a malevolent Jew and a malicious Moor are all presented as part of an elaborate strategy to get her back to the seraglio. An atmosphere of ‘extreme dread’ and tension pervade her narrative until she is safely aboard the Portland Man of War destined for Gibraltar, where, after cruising for several days, she arrived on 27 November 1756, to the ‘unspeakable joy’ of her distressed parents. But Marsh’s suffering did not end with her release from captivity. She declared that although she was freed and preserved from harm, ‘it was for still greater sorrows, and in my own country, than any I ever experienced, even in Barbary’ (1: 85). Back at home it is clear that even though she had resisted temptation and conversion, her reputation had suffered and she was keen to stress the preservation of her virtue. She asked that allowance be made for her deception of ‘passing for what [she] really was not’ which, ‘though fictitious’, gave her the ‘greatest Uneasiness […] that the ill-disposed Part of the World would unmercifully,  

165 She was given this information by John Arvona, a Menorcan slave, who was sent from Marrakech to ‘guard some Spanish Bull-dogs, which the Friars, residing in Safee, had ordered to be sent from Cadiz as a Present for his Imperial Highness’, The Female Captive, 2: 92.  
166 Colley, Ordeal, pp. 152-53.
though unjustly censure [her] Conduct’ (2: 10). In her narrative she printed two letters from Mr. Court which proclaimed her virtue and innocence and rid her of all accountability for the ‘Misfortune’ she had no way brought about herself (2: 105). She is further vindicated when Mr. Crisp revealed that his ‘assiduity had proceeded from a stronger attachment than that of friendship’ and declared his love for her. Like the sentimental heroines she was so keen to emulate, her staunch defence of her chastity is rewarded at the end of her narrative. She married James Crisp in Gibraltar before continuing on the final leg of her journey to England. She explains her reasons for marrying him ‘his general good character, the gratitude I owned him, and my Father’s desire, over balanced some other considerations; and we were married’. After her ordeal it was of paramount importance that Marsh return to England as a married woman. Marsh thanked God for preserving her Christian faith and for the safe deliverance of a virtuous Christian captive from the clutches of a despotic Muslim ruler.

Conclusion
As MacLean points out ‘the chronotopes of Marsh’s narrative are not harems or exotic palaces’ but treacherous mountain terrain, sweltering expanses of desert, intimidating long corridors and the wretched, confined rooms of captivity. Raucous crowds of ‘wild Arabs’ and intimidating women haunt the perimeters of her text, threatening to engulf and absorb her. As a result of her insecurity and vulnerability Marsh exhibits hostility to Muslim culture throughout her narrative. The renegades and hybrid women she encountered highlighted the significant threat that represented itself to her feminine English identity and her religious integrity. She resisted any efforts toward acculturation and refused to wear Muslim clothing. For Lady Mary, who was a privileged aristocrat and a diplomatic guest of the Ottomans, the experimentation with and wearing of Ottoman dress was highly performative. She presented it as liberating and empowering. For Marsh the adoption of Muslim clothing would have signalled the opposite – loss of freedom, incarceration and the denunciation of her Christian faith. In the eyes of her own community she would have further aroused suspicion and accusations of having turned Turk. In an effort to convey the preservation of her virtue and the faithfulness

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167 *The Female Captive*, 2:155.
168 MacLean, ‘Slavery and Sensibility’, p. 175.
of her Christian soul she constantly reiterated her detachment from Moroccan culture.

Although women were thought to be able to ‘penetrate and unveil’ forbidden female spaces, Marsh’s account is devoid of the expected erotic tropes of the harem and its captivating women. Marsh was privy to several harems, but she paid little attention to them and her descriptions of the women are bland, desexualised and mundane. As Ruth Yeazell emphasizes, contrary to the imaginative depictions by Western writers, harems are most often just ordinary household spaces. Marsh’s experience of Moroccan harems was ‘actual’ and as she portrayed it, a frightening and threatening experience. Her narrative does not allow for the erotic imaginings prevalent in male accounts. Conversely, it is Marsh herself, at the centre of her narrative, as the vulnerable virgin confined by the attractive sultan, who supplies the elements of excitement, titillation and desire. Her encounter with Sidi Mohammad is ambiguous in that she claimed to be afraid for her virtue but she presented her meetings in terms of attraction and courtship. While Marsh hinted at the sexual threat to which she was exposed she broke with convention by portraying the despotic tyrant in her narrative as sympathetic and sensitive. When she refuted her false conversion he was easily placated and granted her freedom, despite his obvious attraction to her. Unlike male authored captivity accounts there are no visceral scenes of torture and mutilation. Instead Marsh created an atmosphere of suspense and added a hint of romantic intrigue to her narrative and used feminine sensibility to create a story-like account to maintain the readers’ interest.

Marsh presented herself as a beleaguered heroine and used the conventions of sentimental romance relying on displays of sensibility and ‘passive obedience and non-resistance’ to elicit sympathy from the reader (2: 33). The extreme physical hardships and geographical distances traversed by Marsh cannot be viewed lightly. Her vulnerable position as a lone Christian female was traumatic and her narrative reflects the terror, anxiety and insecurity she felt. The threat of physical violation and spiritual conversion that loomed over Marsh as a defenceless female captive added to the suspense and thrilling appeal of her narrative. While playing the role of vulnerable victim she was also tough-minded, used initiative and displayed agency in refusing to wear Moroccan clothing, confronting the sultan and securing her

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169 Bekkaoui, White Women Captives, p. 29.
170 Yeazell, Harems of the Mind, p. 1.
freedom. Marsh received preferential treatment over the other captives, bribed her captors, talked her way out of conversion and negotiated her release. The threat to Marsh’s body and soul is presented as imminent up until she left Morocco and was back in Christian territory. Her constancy, fortitude and resistance to conversion were a victory for Christianity and ideals of chaste womanhood. Marsh emerges intact and steadfast but it is questionable as to whether her ambiguous narrative could have redeemed her damaged reputation.

There is little doubt that the experience of female captivity raised concerns about acculturation, assimilation and apostasy. Marsh suffered accusations and insinuations which she hoped to alleviate by publishing her narrative. Her account presents a female captive who was not merely passive but who was proactive and instrumental in securing her safety and release. Through her text we hear the voice of a unique woman who survived Barbary captivity with body and soul intact.
Conclusion

Christians who were held captive in the Barbary States were threatened with a forceful alteration of identity and circumstance. Countless captives turned their backs on Christianity, embraced Islam and turned Turk. The figures were significant enough that from the late sixteenth century to the mid-eighteenth century the cultural and religious repercussions of Barbary captivity were well-known to the English public. Whether captives converted voluntarily or were coerced, turning Turk was usually referred to in hostile terms and perceived negatively. There was uncertainty amongst the general populace as to what exactly conversion entailed. Captivity narratives, whether short and anecdotal or lengthy works of prose, recounted intimate details of a culture and religion which Christians generally considered inferior to their own.

Forced conversion, sodomitical Muslims and lustful women luring Christians away from their faith were central components of most captivity narratives. Christian readers struggled to come to terms with many aspects of turning Turk which were revealed by captives. In particular, circumcision, sodomy or the sexual violation of female captives caused concern. A significant trope of captivity narratives was the gruesome account of the mandatory conversion and circumcision of their fellow Christians. Circumcision was considered a permanent, irreversible sign, a symbol of membership of a foreign culture and affiliation to an alien religion with strange beliefs and practices. Through circumcision male captives bore an indelible mark on the body of apostasy. Equating circumcision with castration and eunuchs served to emasculate Christian men who had turned Turk.

Conversion to Islam also carried with it a suggestion of an alteration or deviation in sexual preferences and accusations of sodomitical behaviour. While sodomy did occur in England, as is evidenced from trials, plays and poems in the period, it was a charge levelled at foreigners in general, and Muslims in particular. The sodomizing Muslim was a standard image for travellers who described the various acts of sodomy they claimed to have witnessed. Travel accounts and Barbary captivity narratives emphasize that sodomy was considered a legitimate threat for male captives. Insinuations about ‘sodomitical’ behaviour aroused suspicion that captives may have willingly transgressed and their sexual predilections were a cause of curiosity and apprehension. Consequently reintegration for returned captives was
fraught with suspicion of sexual misconduct. Apostasy sermons were introduced to publicly shame the apostate and to bring him back to Christianity. Penitential rites similar to those prescribed for those who were sexually promiscuous reinforce the association of turning Turk with sexual transgression.

The portrayal of foreign women in captivity accounts gave rise to further uneasiness about sexuality and miscegenation. In many narratives the temptation to abandon one’s religion and turn Turk was personified by extravagant depictions of alluring Eastern women. Male captives who claimed to have been allowed to enter prohibited female spaces told of their resistance to sexual snares and conversion. Some recounted tales of erotic interludes and romantic trysts but cautioned the reader about the threat of conversion attached to such encounters. For Christian men, turning Turk was imagined to involve sexual entrapment – both by lust-fuelled women and sodomizing men – the result of which was physical capitulation and spiritual surrender.

Equally the issue of Christian women held in Barbary captivity caused considerable anxiety. Female captivity raised similar concerns about acculturation, assimilation, apostasy and sexual violation. Images of insatiable infidels raping and defiling the bodies of Christian women, while condemning their souls to eternal damnation, formed some of the most common images of contact with the Muslim world. Returned women captives were suspected of sexual misconduct and found reintegration difficult. Most seem to have shunned notoriety, choosing to remain silent rather than record their experiences. Writing in the mid-eighteenth century, Elizabeth Marsh, as we have seen, was an exception. Like many male authors she published her narrative in the hope of alleviating insinuations levelled at her following her return from captivity. Marsh positioned herself at the centre of her narrative as a beleaguered heroine threatened by physical violation and spiritual conversion. Without using visceral scenes of torture or mutilation she created an atmosphere of anticipation and suspense. She admitted to inadvertently turning Turk and hinted at the sexual threat to which she was exposed but, she portrayed her captor as sympathetic and added a hint of romantic suggestion to her narrative by displaying ambiguous feelings towards him. Nevertheless the threat to Marsh’s body and soul is presented as imminent up until she left Morocco. Marsh endured extreme physical and emotional hardship and her narrative reflects the anxiety and insecurity she felt as a defenceless female captive.
In its examination of early modern Barbary captivity narratives this thesis has covered an expansive historical sweep. From the short fledgling narratives written in the late sixteenth century to the more detailed accounts of the seventeenth century and extending the chronological framework to incorporate the first Barbary captivity narrative written by a woman in 1769, this thesis has investigated the differences between male and female experiences of captivity and conversion, and in the public articulation of those experiences. It has examined the complex relationship between truth and fiction in captivity narratives and how it changes over time. The captivity narrative emerged as a factual genre due its claims to truthfulness and original empirical evidence and became increasingly ambitious in its attempt to document a foreign culture. With the promise of untethered access to an unfamiliar space a captive could recount his personal experience of captivity as authoritative evidence of the truth about Muslims. Captivity narratives, based on the authenticity of personal experience, confirmed negative stereotypes and reaffirmed the supposed superiority of Christianity over Islam.

The thesis has looked at the ways in which early modern identity was articulated in print and how it might be transformed and what was at stake in that transformation. The mandatory adaptation involved in captivity highlights the malleability of cultural identity. Captives convey considerable anxieties in their attempts to maintain an unwavering stance between observer and participant in an allegedly inferior culture. Many state their abhorrence and detestation of Islam but simultaneously recount their acclimatization to Islamic culture and exhibit pride in their achievements in that society. Sharp anomalies are evident in many accounts which highlight the acute crisis of identity produced by captivity and conversion. Reassuming an English, Christian identity would have been as strange to many captives as their initial experiences in North Africa. Reintegration is mired by cynicism and accusations of culture crossing and apostasy leading to cultural isolation and uncertainty.

The study has also highlighted the role of equivocation in conversion. In discussing conversion captives use a standard opposition of bodily subjugation and internal freedom and are careful to emphasize that they converted under duress and that their actions did not reflect the intentions of their hearts. Nevertheless, those who embraced the ‘profession of Turcism’ were considered to have crossed religious, cultural and sexual boundaries. In the popular imagination the convert’s
transgression was manifested in hidden bodily changes, unfathomable deviation and sexual transgression. Turning Turk was imagined to not only damn the Christian soul but to contaminate and penetrate the body.
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