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PIRACY, SLAVERY, AND ASSIMILATION:
WOMEN IN EARLY MODERN CAPTIVITY LITERATURE

By

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PIRACY, SLAVERY, AND ASSIMILATION:
WOMEN IN EARLY MODERN CAPTIVITY LITERATURE

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University of Nebraska, 2011

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This thesis examines a hitherto neglected body of works featuring female characters enslaved in Islamicate lands. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many Englishmen and women were taken captive by pirates and enslaved in what is now the Middle East and North Africa. Several writers of the time created narratives and dramas about the experiences of such captives. Recent scholarship has brought to light many of these works and pointed out their importance in establishing what was still a young, unsure, and developing English identity in this early period. Most of this scholarship, however, has dealt with narratives of the male captivity experience, leaving literary representations of women's experiences in captivity largely unexplored. I fill the gap in this thesis, using both captivity narratives, such as Emanuel D'Aranda's *History of Algiers*, and dramas, including Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turke*, Philip Massinger's *The Renegado*, and Lodowick Carlell's *Osmond the Great Turk*. I argue that early modern captivity literature maintained a gendered double-standard that allowed men to reaffirm the strength of their European and Christian identities despite the power of Islamic hegemony while simultaneously exposing the faithless flaws of the "weaker sex," creating within their literature female captive characters who ultimately betray their "true," European identities.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
1. Stereotypes of Women—“Turkish” and Otherwise.....	6
2. Early Modern Drama’s Captive Women	12
3. Narrative and Historical Accounts of Women’s Captivity.....	20
4. Local English Politics in Early Modern Tales of Female Captivity	39
Conclusion.....	52
Bibliography.....	54

Scholarly discourse surrounding early modern captivity and conversion in Islamicate lands has largely centered on male experiences, pointing out the ways in which male religious and national identity was threatened or reaffirmed in the captivity literature and dramas written by men and about men during the period.¹ Very little research has illuminated women's experiences in captivity and stories of conversion to Islam. While scholars such as Daniel Vitkus, Barbara Fuchs, and Jonathan Burton have, to borrow a phrase from Bernadette Andrea's *Women and Islam in Early Modern Literature*, investigated how “increasingly racialized representations of religious conversion placed profound cultural and political pressures on English *men's* sense of their national identity,” no sustained study has yet explored European Christian women's experiences as captives in the early modern Islamicate.²

A variety of obstacles stand in the way of such a study, including a tendency among scholars in women's studies to focus on works written by women, rather than works written about women by men, which constituted the only way women's tales of captivity found their way into print in early modern England. For example, Andrea's work, while doing much to uncover the female side of Anglo-Islamic relations by analyzing women's writing on Islam during the early modern period, only briefly

1 I use the term “Islamicate lands” rather than “Islamic lands” in this essay since “Islamic lands” carries the connotation that all peoples in these lands were Muslim, which is inaccurate. The term “Islamicate” carries no such meaning, but does describe the religious nature of the governing bodies over the area now referred to as the Middle East and North Africa. For examples of scholarship on male identity issues and captivity, see Patricia Parker, “Preposterous Conversion: Turning Turk and its Pauline' Rerighting,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 2.1 (Spring/Summer 2002); Nabil Matar, “Introduction: England and Mediterranean Captivity, 1577-1704,” *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England*, ed. Daniel J. Vitkus (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001).

2 Bernadette Diane Andrea, *Women and Islam in early modern English literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5 (Emphasis in original). Among the works of the three scholars listed here, Andrea specifically cites Vitkus' “Turning Turk in Othello: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor” (1997), Barbara Fuch's “Conquering Islands: Contextualizing *The Tempest*,” (1997), and Burton's “Anglo-Ottoman Relations and the Image of the Turk in *Tamburlaine*,” (2000).

mentions issues of women's captivity. This is probably by necessity, as her book relies mostly on analyses of women's writing, setting aside works written about women by men. Another obstacle to studies of women enslaved in North Africa is a belief among captivity researchers that there simply wasn't much said about women on the subject in the early modern period by authors of either gender. Captivity researcher Linda Colley, for example, though she takes a special interest in writing about female captivity (mainly as it exists in the mid-seventeenth century and later, though she comments more briefly on earlier centuries), argues that, pre-1700, "[r]epresenting Barbary as a place of sexual threat for captive British women" was "unusual," and that "the experiences of British women in North Africa in general had rarely been touched on in any detail" except in "dry, government documents."³ Nabil Matar, though he is careful to include in his historical studies what allusions to women he can find in such "dry" documents, makes a similar statement, going so far as to say at one point: "there is *no* information about the condition of captured women among the Muslims."⁴

While there may not be a large body of documents to assist the historian in building up a picture of women's actual experiences in captivity in this period, there is a significant body of literature which can be compiled to show how their experiences were conceived by male European writers and displayed to audiences and readers in Europe. Stories told by male captives such as Emanuel D'Aranda, Francis Brooks, and others related what their authors had heard and seen of female captivity during their own enslavement, and histories and descriptions of the Ottoman Empire often included stories

3 Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600 – 1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002), 128.

4 Nabil Matar, "Wives, Captives, Husbands, and Turks: The First Women Petitioners in Caroline England," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 23 (1997): 120-1 (emphasis is my own).

about the lives and experiences of captive women in the Sultan's seraglio and elsewhere. Dramas such as Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turke*, Philip Massinger's *The Renegado*, Lodowick Carlell's *Osmond the Great Turk, otherwise called the noble servant*, to name only a few, also featured female characters coping with captivity among the Muslims.

A study of the literature of female captivity available in England in the early modern period reveals the manner in which men portrayed women's experiences in Islamicate lands and can balance gendered conclusions drawn by recent studies of male captivity and conversion narratives. Whereas male captivity accounts were, as Matar states, intended to assert national and personal identity, in the case of women, whose captivity tales were only told through men's writing in this period, identity was much more something imposed than something asserted.⁵ Portrayals of female captives in Islamicate lands regularly cast Christian women as chaste and faithful, and women who had "turned Turk" as having become whores and slaves of passion. To complicate matters further, these early, male-authored narratives of female captivity claimed to offer more accurate accounts of slavery than romances and dramas, putting themselves in the reputedly more reliable category of histories or of first-hand travel accounts. But despite these attempts at establishing authenticity, their authors nevertheless tended to paint women's stories with as gender-biased a brush as their dramatic counterparts. Accounts of women's captivity available both in dramatic and prose form in this period thus largely reaffirmed sexual stereotypes already existing in English literature and culture.

Though some studies have briefly mentioned the association of women's turning Turk with harlotry, they have done it as a part of larger descriptions of men's conversion.

5 Matar, "Introduction," 37.

The lustful Turkish woman is usually described as being a threat to *male* fidelity and identity, not as an image descriptive of the identity issues captive (and non-captive) *women* characters deal with in early modern literature. Rarely have scholars asked what the conflation of women's turning with sexual conversion means *for women* or how captivity in the Islamic world affected women's identities. To my knowledge, there are only two studies that have approached these issues, yet neither gives us a complete picture of the world of women's captivity.⁶ Both concentrate exclusively on the seraglio, or “harem,” in their research. The seraglio, however, was only one of a variety of stations a woman could occupy in a captivity narrative; she was also frequently depicted as a domestic servant, or as a cloth-worker, sewing for the profit of her owner.⁷ To offset this obsessive interest on just one aspect of female captivity, this essay takes into account portrayals of enslaved women both inside and outside of the harem and focuses on female captivity and conversion as something important for reasons other than its impact on male narratives and male identity.

In early modern captivity and conversion stories featuring enslaved women, sexual concerns are key. For both men and women in this period, turning Turk meant not only a change in religion, but also a change in sexual practice. I argue here, however, that sexual issues were emphasized far more strongly in women's stories of captivity. Thus, “turning,” for women, did not necessarily mean becoming Muslim. It meant becoming

6 Andrea briefly discusses female conversion in captivity in a reading of Paulina's role in *The Renegado*, and Bindu Malieckal argues that a knowledge that there were captive women in the Ottoman Empire would have complicated audiences' views of Turkish women on the stage, yet neither gives us a complete picture of the world of women's captivity. See Andrea, *Women and Islam*, 6-8; Bindu Malieckal, “Slavery, Sex, and the Seraglio: 'Turkish' Women in Early Modern Texts,” in *The Mysterious and the Foreign in Early Modern England*, eds. Helen Ostovich, Mary V. Silcox, and Graham Roebuck (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 58.

7 See for example Ottaviano Bon, *A description of the grand signour's seraglio or Turkish emperours court*, trans. and ed. John Greaves (London, 1635), 153.

the stereotypically ravenous and sexually threatening Turkish woman portrayed on the English stage. It meant abandoning chastity and fidelity to husband and nation. Captive women, who were already considered sexually faithless simply by virtue of being women, found themselves in an especially difficult bind. The foreign culture forced upon them in slavery, with its new clothing and language, marked them outwardly as sexual, religious, and national transgressors. This combination of sexual suspicion and cultural assimilation were major features of an early modern captivity genre in which the words “captive woman” and “woman turn'd Turk” were virtually synonymous. Time and again, female characters in dramas and narratives enslaved in North Africa or the Ottoman Empire find themselves written off as already fallen simply by virtue of having been captured. This gendered double standard within the captivity genre allowed men to celebrate their identities and victories over a foreign culture while simultaneously exposing the faithless flaws of the “weaker sex.”

Chapter 1: Stereotypes of Women—“Turkish” and Otherwise

Depictions of women's captivity and conversion in the early modern period frequently speak of changes in sexual habits as a kind of religious conversion. Daniel Vitkus picks up on this connection in his book, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630*, stating that in early modern drama “to turn turk' [i.e. 'to convert to Islam'] carried a certain sexual connotation,” and in the early 1600s was synonymous with “to become a whore' or 'to commit adultery.’”⁸ As early as 1565, a repentant whore or “reformed Magdalen,” Vitkus points out, was known as a “convertite,” further reinforcing the social connection between women's sexual and religious change.⁹ At the time, even the development of a woman's sexual appetite was described as a kind of sexual conversion whereby the woman, once sexually “awakened,” was to a large extent helpless in her attempts to control her desire for more sex. Her womb was seen, Dorothea Kehler says, as “a *creature* ever seeking to bear children and afflicting the entire body if it [did] not do so.”¹⁰

Ironically, as dramatists and writers of other narratives of captivity reinforced the perceived parallel between women's “sexual conversion” or “sexual awakening” and their turning Turk, or conversion to Islam, they also often downplayed the harsh realities of captive life by emphasizing enslaved women's freedom to choose their own sexual (and by extension religious) fate. While this simplified women's identities in men's minds, as any woman playing the whore could be described as a Turk, it complicated issues for

8 Daniel J. Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English theater and the multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 88.

9 Ibid. Vitkus uses this description to set up a discussion of *Othello* as a parody of “reformed courtesan” plays. His book only briefly examines issues of women's conversion in drama in an analysis of Paulina in *The Renegado*, which I will discuss later in this essay.

10 Dorothea Kehler, *Shakespeare's Widows* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 17.

women, who found their sexual status associated with a freely-chosen stance on international political and religious issues: whores were treasonous Turks and enemies to Christian society, while virgins and faithful wives and widows were a credit to their home territory and religion.

Strengthening this early modern cultural equation of renegadism, or turning Turk, with sexual promiscuity was the similarity in the rites of public penance prescribed for both by the English church. Adulterers, fornicators, and other sexual offenders were often required to perform “sheet penance” rituals, wearing a white sheet and standing in the churchyard as the congregation gathered.¹¹ A repentant soul who had “turned turk” and desired to return to the fold, similarly, was required, according to the 1637 Laudian “Rite for Returned Renegades,” to stand at the entrance to the church on a prescribed Sunday “in a penitent fashion in a white sheet and with a white wand in his hand, [...] head uncovered, [...] countenance dejected.”¹² Such renegades were to confess and denounce their sins before the congregation and take part in an elaborate ceremony. During these procedures, the guilty party could find himself the subject of a scathing sermon denouncing his actions, as is evidenced by Edward Kellet's 1627 *Return from Argier*. In this text, an English renegado seeking forgiveness is exposed and excoriated in a manner that connects his sexual change (in his case, as a male converting to Islam, the bodily change of circumcision) with his terrible sin. Says the preacher, recalling the fig leaves with which Adam covers his nakedness in *Genesis*:

11 Richard Cooke's sermon, published in 1629 as *A white sheete, or A warning for whoremongers*, is an example of just such a sermon. For a lengthy list of examples of sheet penance, both archival and literary, see Gordon Williams, *A dictionary of sexual language and imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart literature* (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 1231-4.

12 William Laud, “Laudian Rite for Returned Renegades,” in *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England*, ed. Daniel J. Vitkus (New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 2001), 362.

I intend, (by God's grace) in a holy servitude, for the good of thy soule, and for the terrour of others, 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 monstrosnesse of your offense, and that others may avoide the like.¹³

The deeply sexual undertones of this public punishment are clear. This complex passage paints a picture of the intent of public penance for returned renegades to figuratively pull away the “figge-leaves” and reveal the naked, circumcised member of the perpetrator, the symbol of his conversion to Islam. Thus, sexual, religious, and cultural “betrayals,” as manifested by changes in bodily or outward appearance, are the signs of the renegado, or of one who has “turned turk.”

Kellet directly links sexual promiscuity to Islam in his sermon not only in a long condemnation of circumcision, but in other ways as well. As a part of an excoriation of the supposed Islamic belief in a heaven of sensual pleasures, he describes the religion as encouraging lasciviousness, saying, “The grand Epicure certainly, if he was not a Fore-runner of the Great Turke, yet would quickly have turned to his Religion. Is this a believe to be preferred before the Christian?”¹⁴ He expounds on this point at length, claiming that “Mahomet,” saying was “a great seducer” and “a salacious, lustful *amoroso*,” adding that “his intemperate lasciviousness, was wayted on by infirmities and sicknesses correspondent to his lewdness.” He even traces the origin of the turban to Mahomet's use of a head-covering to hide the disfiguring effects of venereal disease. Clearly, to convert

13 Edward Kellet, *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), 17-8.

14 *Ibid.*, 32.

to Islam, or to adopt aspects of its culture, was linked in the English mind to libertinism and other sexual acts that deserved public humiliation and condemnation.¹⁵

The idea that turning Turk meant “to become a whore” was strengthened still more by an idea common in England at the time that Islamic women were lustful and promiscuous and that this attitude was directly connected to their religious belief. The Islamic view of paradise, which, according to travelers' reports of the time, was a place of rampant sexuality in which men caroused with multiple women who remained virgins forever, was said to contribute to Turks' addiction to sexual pleasure.¹⁶ English theater especially reflected this idea, as, for example, in Donusa, a Turkish woman in Philip Massinger's 1630 play, *The Renegado*, who states openly that for those of her “Ottoman race [...] religion / Allows all pleasure.”¹⁷ Any woman who was converted to this religion that allowed “all pleasure” and “turned turk,” could by extension be expected to also take on the sexual habits of a Turkish woman.

Bindu Malieckal takes this suggestion and a step further, arguing that an enslaved woman, by taking on (or being forced into) the stereotypical lifestyle of a Turkish woman, could completely lose her European and Christian identity. In an essay entitled “Slavery, Sex, and the Seraglio: 'Turkish' Women in Early Modern Texts,” she explains that she chooses to put the word “Turkish” in quotes when referring to “Turkish” women “because slave women of the Ottoman harem were not ethnic Turks but Europeans, Central Asians, and Africans.”¹⁸ She points out that literature of the time mirrors this, as various early modern dramas and narratives portray “Turkish” women sometimes as

15 Ibid., 22-3.

16 Daniel J Vitkus, Ed., *Three Turk Plays* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2000): 14-15.

17 Philip Massinger, “The Renegado,” *Three Turk Plays*, ed. Daniel J. Vitkus (New York, Columbia University Press, 2000), 1.2.48-50.

18 Malieckal, “Slavery,” 58.

white, sometimes as black.¹⁹ What identified a woman as “Turkish,” then, was not her ethnicity, but her sexual attitudes. After briefly outlining the portrayal of “Turkish” women in various dramas and travel narratives as wanton and dangerously tempting sex objects, Malieckal states: “the sexualization of 'Turkish' women and by extension the harem in early modern drama is a 'territorialization' of the 'Orient'—English and European authors' efforts to define the parameters of their own self and space.”²⁰ In other words, in the case of women, sexuality served as the litmus test for determining European or Turkish identity status. Other factors such as skin color, while important in later centuries, took a back seat in the early modern period.

This method of identification, encouraged by early modern dramas and captivity tales, created an environment wherein sexual transgression, or violation of the sexual and by extension territorial boundary between Turk and Christian, could be read as a kind of cultural treason. This attitude is reflected in an anonymous letter sent to King Charles I in 1636, stating that a trade should be made: “whores, harlots, & idle lascivious portion of the female sect [*sic*]” for captive Englishmen, in order that “one harlot may redeem half a dozen captives.”²¹ As harlots had already declared their citizenship as Turks by crossing the boundaries of identity drawn up by the English, having them cross a more obvious political boundary likely seemed a just punishment for such cultural treason.

The reasons for this fear of women's cultural treason become clearer when one understands the nature of the perceived early modern Turkish threat. Malieckal, in drawing her conclusion regarding territorialization, refers to a 2000 work on East/West

19 Ibid., 59.

20 Ibid., 66-7.

21 Quoted in David Delison Hebb, *Piracy and the English government, 1616-1642* (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1994), 161.

identity and the harem by Irvin Cemal Schick that states that this East/West boundary was one that “served both Europe's self-definition and its imperial ambitions.”²² In the nineteenth century on which Schick focuses, “imperial ambitions” towards the Middle East were clearly in existence in Europe. In the early modern period, however, the governing body of same area was itself seen as a real imperial threat. “Turkish” women in harems of the time were, once again, not really Turkish at all, but Europeans and others subjected to Islamic hegemony, often taken in Eastern European wars in which *their* countries were colonized by an overwhelming imperial Ottoman force. Sexualization of “Turkish” women in the early modern period, then, was not an identification which sought to conquer, but one which desperately sought to defend against a conqueror. In firmly establishing chastity as Christian and harlotry as Turkish, writers seem to have created a lascivious straw-woman, one which stood as a warning against the abandonment of Christian ideals in the face of what was still seen as a very real Islamic threat.

22 Irvin Cemal Schick, “The Women of Turkey as Sexual Personae: Images from Western Literature,” in *Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Woman*, ed. Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 83.

Chapter 2: Early Modern Drama's Captive Women

A significant body of dramatic works featuring women taken captive by Islamic pirates was enacted on stage in the early modern period. In the interest of space, only two of these plays will be explored here: Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turke* (1612), and Philip Massinger's *The Renegado* (1630). Both of these pieces have become central works in current discourse on so-called "Turk plays" and Mediterranean piracy. Scholars such as Vitkus, Malieckal, Andrea, and Patricia Parker have all picked up on their similarities in characters and themes, with Vitkus acknowledging that Massinger's play "seems to offer a rewriting" of Daborne's, with Daborne's ending in tragedy and Massinger's in victory for its Christian characters.²³ In both plays, the leading male role (John Ward, a notorious English pirate in Daborne's play, and Vitelli, an Italian merchant in Massinger's) is confronted by a beautiful Turkish woman (Voada in Daborne and Donusa in Massinger) who seduces him and tempts him to "turn turk." In Daborne's tragic play, Ward gives in and converts, while in Massinger's, Vitelli manages to convert his Turkish seductress to Christianity. Scholars have up to this point focused largely on the Ward-Voada/Vitelli-Donusa relationships as being parallel examples of the threat of the Turkish woman to male European and Christian identity, yet this reading, while it illuminates men's conversion issues, leaves women's issues unexamined.²⁴

Rare discussions about the role of Daborne and Massinger's captive female characters center either on their status as foils to the more promiscuous Turkish women characters or on Massinger's Paulina, a woman held in the Sultan's harem who feigns

23 Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 159. See also Parker, "Preposterous Conversion," 14-17, 24-27; Andrea, *Women and Islam*, 6-8; Malieckal, "Slavery," 67.

24 On the Ward-Voada/Vitelli-Donusa relationship, see Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 88.

turning Turk in the final act in order to save her Christian friends.²⁵ Paulina, in fact, has become the classic example of early modern female conversion to Islam. Vitkus and Parker have both used the scene in which she announces “I will turn turk” as evidence for the fact that turning Turk was synonymous with “turning whore” in women's cases, as Paulina announces her sexual and religious change—from coy to forward and from Christian to Muslim—in the same breath.²⁶ This argument, while it has been illuminating, on one side simplifies the roles of two very complicated characters by casting them as mere opposites to their Turkish counterparts, and on the other tends to ignore the role of Daborne's female captive character: Alizia.

Alizia is a Frenchwoman taken captive in the first act of Daborne's play who, dressed as a man, finds herself sexually pursued by Voada. Alizia's most obvious parallel in Massinger's play is Paulina, the only other captive woman, but she also has much in common with Vitelli. Both she and Vitelli are pursued by a seductive Turkish woman. Both are at first hesitant to give in to the pursuit even slightly, but allow the tryst to continue out of a hope that it will somehow allow them to free an enslaved loved one. However, while Vitelli's “giving in” ultimately leads to success, Alizia's ends in disaster. Through their close parallels and divergent fates, Alizia and Vitelli reveal the profound difference between representations of men's and women's experiences with Islam, and the double standard captive women characters were subjected to on stage as they struggled to avoid embodying a treasonous stereotype.

Daborne's Alizia is captured aboard ship and taken to the marketplace in Tunis by pirates in the first act of *A Christian Turn'd Turke*, making this the only early modern

25 On captive women's status as foils, see Malieckal, “Slavery,” 68; Claire Jowitt, *Voyage Drama and Gender Politics 1589-1642* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 168.

26 Parker, “Preposterous Conversion,” 24; Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 88.

English drama featuring the capture of a European woman by either Turkish pirates or renegados on stage.²⁷ She also defies the usual categorization of captive women in Islamic lands as harem slaves, as she never enters a seraglio, nor does one exist within the play. Instead, Alizia disguises herself as a man and serves as John Ward's page. These things combined make her unique in relation to other portrayals of captive women.

When she first appears on stage, Alizia is “putting on the weed of a sailor's boy” in order to hide her sex and preserve her virginity. In her first lines, her central thought is of faithfulness to her soon-to-be husband, Raymond, as she ponders jumping overboard: “Since I am denied his [Raymond's] arms, let my virginity / Be offered unto him in sacrifice. / 'Twill be some comfort his love a maiden dies.”²⁸ Alizia is only deterred from this course by her brother, Lemot, who convinces her that she need not fear, as “Chaste thoughts are guided by a power that's just,” implying that God will not allow her to be raped if she is chaste. The crew fights to defend the ship, but fails, and Lemot is thrown overboard. The rest of those captured, including Alizia, narrowly avoid meeting the same fate only because of infighting among the pirates (1.2.15).

Voada first spots Alizia (who is still dressed as a page boy) in scene six, remarking admiringly “It is a lovely boy, rare featured! Would he were mine!” (1.6.93-4). Her desires are not abated in a later scene, in which she adds, “I must enjoy his love, though quenching of my lust did burn the world besides” (1.6.100-1). As such, Alizia quickly finds her sexual identity threatened through the advances of Voada, but, knowing that her would-be husband, Raymond, has also recently been enslaved by pirates, she chooses to

27 One other play, William Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, features the capture of a woman, Miranda, by Mediterranean pirates, but these pirates are never connected to Islam or described as renegados in the play text.

28 Robert Daborne, “A Christian Turn'd Turke,” *Three Turk Plays*, ed. Daniel J. Vitkus (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 1.2.8-13. (Citations to this play will be in parentheses throughout the rest of this section.)

appease her seductress as a means to free him. Still in the form of a cabin boy (and naming herself “Fidelio”), she allows Voda to believe that she will satisfy her sexual desires in exchange for Raymond's freedom. Eventually, Voda presses so hard for satisfaction, however, that Alizia is forced to cross cultural and sexual boundaries in order to free her lover. As Rabshake, a Jewish servant who at one point in the play claims to have seen “Fidelio” and Voda together, reports: “She [Voda] makes him [Alizia/Fidelio] sing bawdy songs to her, looks fortunes in his fist and babies in his eyes, makes dialogues betwixt him, her little dog, and herself, lies upon her back, puts his hand in her hand, and wrings it till tears come again” (1.13.78-81). This seemingly insignificant moment has broad implications in determining Alizia's fate, as it represents a moment of transgression, or boundary-crossing, wherein she enters Turkish territory and begins to lose her identity.

In the end, it is this act of boundary-crossing that causes Alizia’s downfall. Alizia arranges a meeting between herself and Raymond using the secret watchword “Fidelio,” but is discovered by Voda, who, jealous of “Fidelio's” charms, kills Raymond. As he dies, Raymond, speaking to the open air, as he does not yet know she is there standing over him, blames Alizia for his death, saying: “Oh false, false Alizia ... / couldst not wish / So great a plague to me, that I should hear / Thou wert turned prostitute? Ungentle, cruel woman!” (1.15.24-9). Alizia acknowledges her fault in his death and the loss of her identity, saying “Alas, I am nothing, nothing” (1.15.55). Only when Raymond conjures her by heaven to reveal herself does she acknowledge that she is Alizia, his “constant, loyal friend” (1.15.57). She then stabs herself.

In *The Renegado*, Philip Massinger's Vitelli, like Alizia, is determined to save a loved one, his sister, Paulina, from captivity among the Muslims. In the very first scene

of the play, he makes known his determination to avenge her, and joins with Francisco “in a desperate course / For her delivery.”²⁹ An opportunity presents itself to him when Donusa, the Emperor's niece, visits his shop in Tunis and unveils herself to him, requesting he visit her. Despite being warned by the Catholic Bishop Francisco of the sexual danger in meeting the appointment, Vittelli determines to see her again not only because of Donusa's beauty, but because “She may be a means to free distressed Paulina” (1.3.175). Like Alizia, then, Vitelli is willing literally to flirt with treason and danger through sexual boundary-crossing in order to save a loved one.

When Vitelli visits Donusa, his similarities to Alizia become even more apparent. The scene in which Donusa seduces him closely mirrors the illicit meetings of Voada and Alizia/Fidelio as described by Rabshake. At one point, as Vitelli plays the fool, Donusa makes her desires clear, saying:

When a young lady wrings you by the hand, thus,
Or with an amorous touch presses your foot,
Looks babies in your eyes, plays with your locks,
Do not you find without a tutor's help
What 'tis she looks for? (2.2.121-6).

This seems to be a direct rewrite of the dialogue given in Daborne's play, with Voada's role clearly replaced by Donusa's, and Alizia/Fidelio's by Vitelli's. In both plays, then, Alizia and Vitelli at first intend to walk a careful line and avoid any treasonous sexual crossing into Turkish territory, but end up deeply entangled in the Turkish world. Alizia's

²⁹ Massinger, “The Renegado,” 1.1.57-8. (Citations to this play will also be in parentheses throughout the rest of this section.)

transgression leads to the death of herself and her lover, and Vitelli's leads to torture in Turkish prison.

Vitelli, however, is eventually able to escape, convert Donusa to Christianity, and leave Turkish territory with those he loves, while Alizia's death and that of her lover remain both tragic and final, revealing a sharp double standard in the worlds of men's and women's conversion or near-conversion to Islam. Why is it that the captive woman's attempts to free herself and her lover utterly fail, while the captive man succeeds beyond what even he hoped?

On closer inspection of the plays and the cultural context surrounding them, two clear reasons surface. First, as noted in the previous section, since religious and sexual conversion were closely intertwined in the early modern cultural world, and since women were consistently suspect in terms of their chastity, Alizia is held guilty until proven innocent. This is made very clear in the text. Alizia's lover Raymond, for example, suspects that this "Fidelio" he is to meet may be Alizia, but refuses to hope she is alive, as he believes "she's too virtuous / To outlive her honor and her chastity, / Which her captivity must needs endanger" (1.15.12-14). His mood, however, immediately and oddly changes when he is shot in the dark by Voada. Unable to see his attacker except by the word she yelled, "Fidelio," he quickly blames Alizia for the deed, assuming that she has "turned prostitute" and calling her "Infidelio" (1.15.29, 39). The speed with which Raymond changes his mind about Alizia's chastity once he suspects she is alive is telling. It seems as though, to him, the only chaste captive woman is a dead captive woman. That Alizia, on being taken captive, had "turned prostitute"—a phrase synonymous with "turned turk,"—as Vitkus points out), is not a surprise at all. It is to be expected of women, as such a sexual conversion is in their very nature. What's more, Alizia's new

perceived status as a whore is not to be pitied, but excoriated. She is as much to blame for her infidelity as her captors. Alizia herself, knowing her place as a woman, acknowledges this when she submits to Raymond's accusations, saying, "My friend, my Raymond, by my means murdered!" (1.15.44, 51). For Alizia, then, the mere fact that she is in captivity, still alive, and a woman all render her immediately suspect in terms of prostitution, infidelity, and overall betrayal of every aspect of her Christian and European identity.

No such suspicion is held of Vitelli, and the consequences of his giving in to Donusa are far less dire in the end. His first lines after being taken captive are not, like Alizia's, those of contemplated suicide but of bold defiance, as he says "What punishment / Soe'er I undergo, I am still a Christian" (3.5.95-6). The Turk Mustafa, who oversees Vitelli's torture, reports to his superior, "I was never witness / Of such invincible fortitude as the Christian / Shows in his sufferings" (4.2.45-7). Even when Donusa is brought to him in a final attempt to seduce him to convert, he proclaims "I'll stand the encounter—charge me home" (4.3.58). Granted, Massinger's play as a whole is more positive than Daborne's, and all of its Christian characters, including the captive Paulina, are meant to be impressive in their resolve, yet a gendered double standard remains. In the first scene of the play, Vitelli, knowing that Paulina is captive in the Asambeg's seraglio, cannot help but imagine that her captor, "by force or flattery, compels her / To yield her fair name up to his foul lust / And after, turn apostata to the faith [...]" Francisco responds to Vitelli's fear not by emphasizing Paulina's personal strength, but the fact that she is aided by a "relic" rumored by "holy men's traditions / To keep the owner free from violence" (1.1.136-38, 148-50). Thus, it is a mystical and masculine protection, not Paulina's own ability, that is supposed to prevent her from turning—the implication being that without

this protection Paulina would be “by force or flattery” sexually awakened and converted from virgin to whore and from Christian to Turk. No such device is used, nor is one necessary to explain Vitelli's successful resistance.

The early modern dramas examined here, then, reveal the cultural expectations of and assumptions about women captive in Islamic lands, and the manner in which an English world already suspicious of women only increased its suspicion of women most to be pitied. For men, captivity could represent a threat to sexual and religious identity, usually in the form of a seductive woman, but for women in this culture, captivity meant conversion almost by default. In both *A Christian Turn'd Turke* and *The Renegado*, the fact that Alizia and Paulina are captive immediately leads the Christian men aware of their situation to question both their sexual and religious status, while no such questioning of the male captives in either play occurs. Captive women, then, were largely guilty of sexual, religious, and cultural treason until proven innocent in early modern drama.

Chapter 3: Narrative and Historical Accounts of Women's Captivity

Accounts of women's captivity are far rarer than men's, not appearing in anything near significant numbers until the 1630s. They are also shorter and never told from the woman's viewpoint or from her own mouth or pen, unlike male narratives, which are found in dozens of often lengthy publications in the sixteenth and seventeenth century many of which were at least reputed to have in part been written by the captive himself.³⁰ Those female narratives that exist are all written by men and from a man's viewpoint, making them little more than hearsay, as women were usually kept separate from men once they were captured.³¹ Despite this lack of contact with slaves of the opposite sex, men did not hesitate to mingle their own narratives with stories they heard about female slaves in Barbary. These stories were usually featured as part of histories or descriptions of life in the lands of Islam and were presented as being more truthful and accurate than depictions found in romances and dramas. An analysis of these texts, performed with an eye to the likely historical conditions of women captive in Islamic lands, however, makes it clear that the same stereotypes and double standards that existed in dramas also existed

30 Matar points out that captivity narratives were in such demand during the period that "an account of captivity in North Africa was written in nearly every decade" between 1577 and 1704. See Matar, "Introduction," 3. Vitkus' bibliography lists no fewer than 27 captivity narratives from the period about Englishmen alone, but none centered on a woman's experience. See Daniel J. Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England*. (New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 2001): 371-6. Colley states that among all captivity narratives written between 1600 and 1800, two thirds were written before 1720, none of which are authored by women. See Colley, *Captives*, 89.

31 Even Emanuel D'Aranda, a Frenchman captured in 1641 who would have had more access to women on account of his being a household slave, rarely saw the women slaves of the house. As he says, his master owned "twenty Women slaves, Christians, who waited on his wife. But they [we]re not often seen in regard they come but very seldome out of their lodgings." At one point, when D'Aranda dares to converse with an English slavewoman, he finds himself taken from his special position in the household and made to work with the other male slaves. See Emanuel D'Aranda, *The History of Algiers and It's [sic] Slavery*, trans. John Davies (London, 1666), 11, 19. For more on separation of enslaved men from women in Barbary, see Robert Charles Davis, *Christian slaves, Muslim masters: white slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 127.

in these early narratives. As such, these narratives represented a special danger to women in captivity—especially to their redemption and release—as they lent authority to the idea that women, if taken captive, had an inevitable tendency to betray their cultural values.

Early modern captivity narratives from Barbary and the Ottoman Empire are almost entirely men's narratives, not only because of a lack of opportunity for women to publish, but also because captivity was largely, though not by any means exclusively, a male experience. Davis estimates an average European slave population of 35,000 total individuals between 1580 and 1680 in Algiers, Tunis, and other North African cities, meaning that at any given time in that century, this was the number of Europeans likely to be found enslaved in North Africa as a result of corsair piracy.³² He concludes that 90 percent of slaves held in Barbary were adult men and estimates that only about 5 percent were adult women, leaving an average of about 1,750 European women in slavery in North Africa at any given time between 1580 and 1680.³³

32 Davis, *Christian Slaves*, 14-15. Davis' count is based on the guesswork of early modern captives in Barbary such as Pierre Dan and Emanuel D'Aranda, counts of slaves gathered in the *bagnos*, or special prisons for slaves in North Africa, by French consuls, and records of persons seized in shipping or coastal raids. It does not include non-European slaves. He sets 35,000 as a rough estimate, repeatedly acknowledging the difficulty and even impossibility of getting a truly accurate count.

33 Davis, *Christian Slaves*, 15, 36. Davis bases this number on a count of French subjects redeemed from slavery between 1582 and 1700 performed by Leïla Blili in « Course et captivité des femmes dans la régence de Tunis aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles, » in *Captius I Esclaus a L'antiguitat I Al Món Modern: Actes Del Xix Col·loqui Internacional Del Girea*, Diàphora (Napoli: Jovene editore, 1996). Blili acknowledges the unlikelihood of women's crossing paths with corsairs, as they were less often at sea. However, she argues that this does not tell the whole story: the low number of redeemed Frenchwomen is also indicative of the difficulties involved in bringing them home (Blili, "Course et captivité des femmes," 259-60). Ellen G. Friedman comes up with the same 5 percent figure, also using information gathered from records of slaves who were redeemed and made it home. She is careful, however, to note that "Since many women were sent to Constantinople, and others were not permitted to be rescued, it is not possible to state whether this bears any relationship to the proportion of women in the captive population." See Ellen G. Friedman, *Spanish Captives in North Africa in the Early Modern Age* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 146-7. All of this implies that the number of slave women in Barbary and the Ottoman Empire was likely higher than five percent of total captives. Edmund Cason's 1647 list of Englishmen, women, and children redeemed from slavery in Algiers includes 19 women among a total of 244 freed, amounting to nearly 8% of total captives, yet even this percentage is likely less than

The reason for the lower numbers of women in slavery in Barbary as compared to men can largely be found in the methods of the pirates who captured them. Barbary pirates of early modern times often hunted other vessels, catching them far from shore where they were more exposed.³⁴ Pirates would board the ships by force, trickery, or intimidation, seize the goods, crew, passengers, and ship, and take all back to their North African harbor for sale.³⁵ Since almost all crew members in European ships of the time were male, women were unlikely to be captured in this most common of piratical practices. Unless a woman was a passenger or had managed to take on the guise of a man and work as a crew member, she was not likely to have been in a position to have ever been captured by a pirate.³⁶

There are known cases, however, of Englishwomen traveling as passengers being taken by pirates. William Okeley, who was taken aboard ship in 1639, mentions in his captivity narrative a man named John Randal “who with his wife and child were taken in the same ship with myself.”³⁷ Also, two of Hugh Cholmley's family's maids were taken by pirates while traveling to Tangiers during the time he was governor there in the

representative. See Edmund Cason, *A relation of the whole proceedings concerning the redemption of the captives in Argier and Tunis* (London, 1647).

34 Davis uses the journal of Thomas Baker, the British Consul in Tripoli in the 1680s, to support the idea that this was pirates' most common method of taking slaves. In seven years, Baker records 30 instances of ships returning with slaves taken at sea and six of ships with slaves taken in coastal raids. Despite this, the huge takes gained from coastal raids likely more than made up for their infrequency, causing Davis to conclude that most slaves probably were taken on land. See Davis, *Christian Slaves*, 33-4.

35 For more on the methods of Mediterranean corsairs in this period, see Davis, *Christian Slaves*, 45-8; John B. Wolf, *The Barbary Coast: Algiers under the Turks, 1500 to 1830* (New York: Norton, 1979), 152-3; Matar, “Introduction,” 7-9; Colley, *Captives*, 48-50.

36 Cases of female transvestism in the predominantly male world of early modern sailing are well documented by Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol in *The Tradition of Transvestism in Early Modern Europe*. Such women were motivated by patriotism in times of war, by a desire to be with their families aboard ship or overseas, or out of desperation for employment and subsistence. Since sailors were in such high demand in Holland and England, especially, Dekker and van de Pol argue that female sailors were far more common in these than in other countries. See Lotte C. Pol and Rudolf M. Dekker, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 102.

37 William Okeley, “Ebenezer; or, A Small Monument of Great Mercy, Appearing in the Miraculous Deliverance of William Okeley (1675),” in *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England*, ed. Daniel J. Vitkus (New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 2001), 156.

1660s,³⁸ and Emanuel D'Aranda's narrative of his 1640-41 captivity contains both the story of a young Genevan girl taken while on a short journey along the coast, and of a young French couple taken on a voyage to Canada.³⁹ Thus, although it was far less common for a woman to be captured aboard ship than a man, it did happen.

More likely for women was capture in coastal raids, in which pirates would land near or at an unsuspecting coastal village and snatch people from the streets or even from their own homes. According to Davis “around three-eighths of all those captured on land were female” and female slaves in Barbary were “eight to ten times more likely” to have come from the coast than from a ship.⁴⁰ Coastal raids were far more frequent in the Mediterranean than in Northern Europe, as pirates regularly sacked the coasts of Spain, Sicily, and Italy, yet there are instances of coastal attacks much further north.⁴¹ According to one naval history, “[f]or villages in England and Wales, as well as the Irish coast, to be raided, and their inhabitants carried away to slavery, was no uncommon thing.”⁴² James I's papers show that in October 1617 a Turkish pirate was reported in the Thames.⁴³ In 1631, Baltimore, Ireland was sacked by pirates. Eighty-three women and children were captured in this raid, in addition to twenty men,⁴⁴ and in 1640, Turkish pirates seized about 60 persons on the Cornish coast.⁴⁵

Whether at sea or on land, the treatment of women, once captured, by the pirates is a matter of dispute. It is easy to assume that a woman taken from her home, culture,

38 Colley, *Captives*, 31.

39 D'Aranda, *History of Algiers*, 166.

40 Davis, *Christian Slaves*, 36.

41 For examples of corsairs raiding Mediterranean coasts, see Davis, *Christian Slaves*, 35-45; Friedman, *Spanish Captives*, 20-23; Colley, *Captives*, 50.

42 William L. Clowes, *The Royal Navy: A History from the Earliest Times to the Present* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1897), 49.

43 Hebb, *Piracy*, 20.

44 Matar, “Introduction,” 14.

45 Davis, *Christian Slaves*, 7.

and family, living in the company of men and sailors who, because of their employment, were apart from women for lengthy periods of time, would be in serious danger of sexual abuse. What little evidence exists on the subject, however, seems to dodge the issue.

Francis Brooks' 1693 captivity narrative, *Barbarian cruelty*, contains an example of such an aversion. It features the story of a ship on a voyage from London to Barbados in 1685, “in which were four Women, two of them being Mother and Daughter.”⁴⁶ On the voyage, Algerine pirates take the ship, crew, and the four women, at which point the narrative reads:

the Captain [of the pirates] asked who the young Woman [the daughter] was, and whether she was ever married? Account being given him concerning her, he ordered her to be put in the Cabin, lest any of his own barbarous Crew should offer to lie with her, and so sailed away for Sally.⁴⁷

The captain's questions as to the young woman's marital status seem to be an effort to determine whether she has had sexual intercourse. This is confirmed later in the narrative when the captain lands at Macqueness (Meknes) and tells the chief Eunuch of the Emperor that she is a virgin.⁴⁸ Apparently, he intends her as a gift to the ruler and, on the voyage back to Meknes, locks her up in order to keep her from being “spoiled.” However, while the virgin is locked up in the Cabin in Brooks's story, the other three women on the ship are not. The implications of this are especially chilling, though one

46 Francis Brooks, *Barbarian cruelty being a true history of the distressed condition of the Christian captives under the tyranny of Mully Ishmael, Emperor of Morocco, and King of Fez and Macqueness in Barbary* (London, 1693): 27-8.

47 Ibid., 29.

48 Ibid., 30.

should keep in mind that Brooks's knowledge of these events could have been no better than secondhand.

In any case, archival evidence garnered from parish records, naval histories, and captivity narratives make it clear that the capture and enslavement of female British subjects in Barbary and the Ottoman Empire was a reality in early modern England. In fact, by the late seventeenth century, the wives of the Dey of Algiers and of the Emperor of Morocco were both Englishwomen, showing the extent to which captive women were being assimilated into and becoming a part of even the higher echelons of their new North African society.⁴⁹ Women who had previously been held captive, but later redeemed, could be seen struggling at home in England as well. One 1635 churchwarden's account reads: "Item. Given a woman, a suckling child and a maid that had a pass from Bristol and had been formerly taken by Turks – 8d," showing that for at least this woman, redemption and return home meant begging for subsistence.⁵⁰ These women's stories, however, were never published and will probably never be known, except as small tales embedded within men's accounts.

One of these men was Emanuel D'Aranda, a Frenchman captured by Turkish pirates in 1640 and held in slavery in Algiers until 1641. After his return home, he wrote *Relation de la captivité et liberté du sieur Emanuel d'Aranda*, which was published in Brussels in 1656. The work was translated into English by John Davies and published in London in 1666 as *The History of Algiers and It's [sic] Slavery*. Davies's titling it a

49 Godfrey Fisher, *Barbary legend; war, trade, and piracy in North Africa, 1415-1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 101.

50 Hebb, *Piracy*, 146. Quoted archive from Cit CRO, Bodmin Borough Accounts, 1635, no. 288; 1637, no. 289.

“History” (and D’Aranda’s calling it a “Relation”) is an attempt to establish its authenticity. In his preface, Davies says the work

. . . is not to be look’d on as a kind of Romance, to please such as fondly imagine, that most of what is acted on the Stages of remote Countries is onely the issue of insinuating Fiction; but as a sincere and plain Relation of that diversity of strange accidents and adventures, good or bad, which happen’d to himself [D’Aranda] or others, during the time of his Slavery.⁵¹

D’Aranda’s narrative, including its descriptions here and there about female captives, were thus presented to the English book-buying public as a “plain Relation” of history. They are presented in opposition to the many stage romances of the time depicting similar captivity and wild adventures on the high seas. However, “insinuating Fictions” in D’Aranda’s own work are evident in his tales of female slavery.

One of D’Aranda’s stories features an Englishwoman who is the victim of a Spanish captive named Domingo. He convinces her (falsely) that his wife has died, and that he is about to come into enough money to redeem the two of them from slavery. He tricks a Moorish woman into buying her from his mistress, and the English woman believes that she has been set free:

she had (as she thought) met with . . . good fortune; but she was as far from it as ever. In the mean time Domingo was perpetually solliciting her, calling God and Heaven to witness, and swearing thousands of Oaths, to assure her of the sincerity of his affection. He cajoll’d her so long, that she condescended to do any thing he

51 D’Aranda, A4.

would have her, impatiently expecting to be transported thence for some part of Christendom.⁵²

The nameless Englishwoman of this story is found pregnant with twins and Domingo is nearly sent to the galleys before moving on to another scheme, at which point the woman exits the story.

The woman's desperate situation is not unlikely to be based on some reality. While there are many stories of male slaves escaping by incredible means, women seem to have had very few options. Typically working as domestic slaves and rarely permitted to go out into public,⁵³ European women who found themselves enslaved would have been forced to rely on men to find the means of escape. Partially because of this, depictions of women's captivity are widely different from those of men. Men's narratives often describe the great lengths men went to regain their freedom. In the case of John Fox's 1589 narrative, Fox stabs a Turk who gets in the way while he and a group of men are trying to escape, calling him a "villain" and a "bloodsucker of many a Christian's blood."⁵⁴ In women's narratives, however, as in the case of this nameless Englishwoman, if their character attempts to use what power she has—her sexuality—to escape, she often meets an awful fate.

The correct means of escape for the early modern woman in a captivity narrative was found not in sexual seduction, but in the opposite—chaste faithfulness and trust in God. As a kind of foil to his Englishwoman, D'Aranda tells the story of a young

52 D'Aranda, *History of Algiers*, 112-3.

53 As an indication of just how difficult it was for female slaves to walk freely in public, Friedman states that while Catholic nations had set up hospitals to care for Christian slaves, women were not permitted to enter, as they could not be out in public. Doctors instead were permitted to enter the homes of their masters and treat them there. Friedman, *Spanish Captives*, 99.

54 Hakluyt, Richard, *The principal nauigations, voyages, traffiques and discooueries of the English nation made by sea or ouer-land, to the remote and farthest distant quarters of the earth, at any time within the compasse of these 1600. yeres.* (London, 1599[-1600]), 133.

Frenchwoman and her and her husband's escape from slavery. Newlywed, the two are captured in 1641 and taken to the slave market, where

[t]he Turks, Moors, Greeks, and Spaniards, who were not wont to see the fashions of the French-woman, with their hair powder'd, and their heads neatly dress'd, look'd on her with much admiration. She said to some Christians who discours'd with her, and comforted her, My onely fear is, that they will make me renounce my Religion.⁵⁵

As D'Aranda says “It seems God was pleas'd with the fear of that woman.”⁵⁶ She is set free through the efforts of the local French Consul, who convinces the Basha that this French ship was “no lawful prize.”⁵⁷ Thus, in D'Aranda's narrative, it is this woman's god-fearing nature that frees her, not her sexuality.

This Frenchwoman's story is emblematic of a recurrent theme in early modern captivity tales—the tendency of authors to use enslaved female characters as symbols or “types” of the strength and power of their nation or religion and the relative weakness of others. In early modern captivity literature, women's personal or individual identities are often elided in favor of their national or religious identities, making them literary pawns in international feuds. In D'Aranda's work, for example, women are rarely identified by name. The primary nomenclature used is: “English-woman” or “French-woman,” with nationality featuring prominently. The text thus encourages a reading of each story with international relations and stereotypes in mind.

55 D'Aranda, *History of Algiers*, 139.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

A Netherlander writing in French, D'Aranda saves his most damning stories of female (and male) captivity for his Spanish characters, and grants its most favorable depiction to the previously-mentioned French newlywed woman. This reveals clear political allegiances on his part, and unsurprisingly so, as much of the Netherlands still held in memory the oppression and conquests of the Spanish. In addition, of *all* the female slaves described by D'Aranda, only this Frenchwoman—the only French, female captive of his narrative—escapes relatively unscathed, thanks not only to her country's close diplomatic ties with the Turks in Algiers, but to her stateliness, fashion-sense, and fear of God.⁵⁸

Women in captivity narratives who reject escape and embrace Islamic culture are given traits opposite to the cultural and religious fidelity of this Frenchwoman. D'Aranda, for example, later tells the story of a Spanish couple, Joseph and Vipra, captured in 1638. The husband, by a strange chance, manages to escape, but is forced to leave his wife behind. He is assumed dead after his disappearance, and his death is “lamented by his wife Vipra,” as D'Aranda says, “[b]ut in a short time, her sorrow ceas'd, for she fell in love with a Renegado [or former Christian turned Turk], named Assan.”⁵⁹

Joseph, meanwhile, by telling his sad tale and gathering alms in Spain, is able to gather the ransom money to set his wife free. He sends a letter requesting she be released

58 Early modern English playwrights seem to have also been sensitive to the national issues of captivity tales. Though many were eager to capitalize on the popular stories to their own advantage, there were limits. As Nabil Matar points out, “[N]ot a single English dramatist addressed the theme of English captivity (although they wrote about continental captives), even at a time when petitions, protests, and parliamentary debates focused attention on their cause.” In other words, when English playwrights did capitalize on the controversy and popularity of captivity tales, they were careful that their captive characters were not English. A degree of separation was needed to ease the pain felt by those who had family members helplessly trapped overseas. It was also needed to avoid the censure of English monarchs whose policies for the redemption of captives, as Matar argues, were grossly lacking as compared to those of France and Spain. See Matar, “Introduction,” 29, 38.

59 D'Aranda, *History of Algiers*, 189.

to him, but she, only five months after his reputed death, “was not well pleased at it, for the affection she bore the Renegado Assan had smother'd all the conjugal love she should have had for her husband; so that she said publickly that she would not return into her Country.”⁶⁰ About this time, D'Aranda states that he became a slave in her former master's household and heard her entire story. In a rare moment in which a former slavewoman who has “turned turk” is granted a direct voice, D'Aranda relates the following dialogue:

I stood one day at the door with her, who said to me, Why are you so melancholy? I answer'd, Because I am not so happy as you are. She ask'd me why? I reply'd, Because you may be set at liberty when you please, for I hear your Husband hath sent five hundred Patacoons for your ransom, and I wonder to find you so unwilling to return into your Country, to your Husband who is so kind, and so faithful to you, as also to exercise the Catholick Religion among your friends and Relations. She roundly made answer, A Turkish Garment will become me as well as a Spanish Petticoat. And with those words she left me and went into the house; whence it might easily be inferr'd, that the love she had for her Gallant, was greater then what she had for her Religion, Country, Husband, and Relations.⁶¹

D'Aranda's version of the conversation reflects the fundamental divide between notions of female and male captivity. D'Aranda sets up the narrative against her, framing her

60 Ibid., 190.

61 D'Aranda, *History of Algiers*, 191.

story in terms of her sudden turn, within five months, against “Religion, Country, Husband, and Relations.” In his view, Vipra is not playing the proper role assigned to her by her culture. She does not make the arduous performance of submission to male authority and resistive chastity required for escape from Barbary. By setting her up as his foil, with him at the center of the larger plot, D'Aranda makes her out as the perfect female villain in multiple senses.

Yet D'Aranda's viewpoint is (perhaps willfully) ignorant of the way in which the realities of women's experiences in Barbary were different from men's experiences. Davis states that women were often given domestic duties as household servants, saying that these “relatively easy posts” were “the lot of virtually all female slaves not taken by their buyers specifically as concubines.”⁶² But to call these “easy posts” is to elide one of the most significant parts of the household experience, and the one that likely made it most difficult for women to return home. Though perhaps women were less likely to be forced to work at hard labor in these domestic situations, they were more thoroughly separated from their own culture and more intimately connected with that of their captor because of the nature of this “easy” work.

Women likely had a greater opportunity to know their captors and their language and culture than many males ever did. Men such as John Fox and Richard Haselton, in their own captivity and escape narratives, were galley slaves. While this was hard work, it was also work that placed Christian Europeans literally “in the same boat” together.⁶³ Other seventeenth-century male captives, such as Joseph Pitts and William Okeley, were sent out to market to work and earn a certain regular amount for their owners. For both

62 Davis, *Christian Slaves*, 71.

63 *Ibid.*, 73, states that there is no record of any female galley slaves.

Pitts and Okeley, their relative freedom in their work, and their ability to meet with other Europeans, directly facilitate their escape. Women's movement in public was much more limited. For example, the John Randal of Okeley's narrative (mentioned earlier) helps to build the boat Okeley uses to gain his freedom, but chooses to stay behind. Okeley explains that his wife and child "were too dear pledges to be left behind and yet too tender things to undergo our difficulties."⁶⁴

Women's close quarters with their captors rendered it incredibly difficult to escape not only because their separation from other Europeans made plans and plots nearly impossible, but because it made them more likely to be assimilated into the culture. Days, weeks, months and years of not hearing one's own language and of constant exposure to a foreign culture undoubtedly had their effect. Friedman points out both that "women and children [were] the most common preference of donors to redemption causes in Spain" and that friars and priests sent to ransom Spaniards in Barbary were directed to seek out women and children first and foremost, as they "were regarded as weakest in the faith and most likely to apostatize under pressure."⁶⁵ Despite this, Davis finds that of several categories of ransomed Spanish-Italian captives including clerics, children, adult men, and women, women had the lowest likelihood of ransom within five years of capture.⁶⁶ For a woman such as Vipra, who believed her husband to be dead, the limited means of escape often meant the only real choice for survival was to embrace the new culture surrounding them and move on.

64 Okeley, "Ebenezer," 169. Later, in 1646, John Randall, his wife Bridget, and their son were all ransomed and returned to England by Edmond Cason, who was commissioned by parliament to retrieve captives. See Cason, *A relation*, 23.

65 Friedman, *Spanish Captives*, 119, 146.

66 Davis, *Christian Slaves*, 170.

While Englishmen's captivity narratives are often an attempt to reestablish the identity of the captive/narrator as Christian (typically either Quaker or Protestant), and as loyal to their country through all difficulties, narratives related by men regarding women's captivity in the early modern period are typically not as generous, viewing them with the same wariness to which women were subjected at home. For the males who wrote what few stories exist about female captivity, a woman's faithfulness—to spouse, country, and religion—was something to be questioned whether she was captive or not. Her turning Turk was not to be taken as a surprise. It was well known that women were fickle—quick to change and to betray.⁶⁷

The earliest known female captivity narrative of Barbary written by an English woman is *The Female Captive*, authored by Elizabeth Marsh in 1769. Linda Colley, who has written extensively on Marsh and female captivity, points out that Marsh is very concerned with maintaining her sexual reputation. As a British lady, she fears she has lost that reputation after her short captivity in Morocco.⁶⁸ Her narrative is thus largely an attempt to maintain control of her own story, an opportunity few women seem to have had in the early modern period. Marsh emphasizes her unwavering defense of her own chastity by relating how she lied to her captor and claimed to be married, though she was not.⁶⁹ She claims that, “from the very beginning of her enforced residence in Morocco, she had trembled for her sexual virtue.”⁷⁰ Women of the early modern period, over half a century before Marsh's time, had no such chance to defend their sexual identity in print.

67 Andrea, *Women and Islam*, 6.

68 Colley, *Captives*, 90.

69 Ibid., 127-8.

70 Ibid., 127.

This obsession with sexual virtue amounts to one of the most fundamental differences between narratives of male and female captivity. While male narratives do at times focus on sexual fidelity through resistance of the wiles of some Muslim woman, narratives of female captivity available to English readers in the early modern period nearly universally focused on sexuality. This is not surprising for a European culture in which the most emphasized role of the woman was, largely, one of chastity and sexual fidelity, while men's roles focused on other issues.

This is reflected in captivity narratives of the time. Okeley states that, in buying and selling male slaves, natives of Algiers “are very curious in examining the hands, for if they be callous and brawny, they will shrewdly guess they have been inured to labor; if delicate and tender, they will suspect some gentleman or merchant.”⁷¹ On the other hand, buyers of women are more concerned with sexual matters. Joseph Pitts describes the market scene in late seventeenth-century Cairo this way:

although women and maidens are veiled, yet 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. And further, as I have been informed, they are sometimes permitted by the sellers (in a modest way) to be searched whether they are virgins or no.⁷²

The division of captive women into categories of “virgin” and “no” is also highlighted in Michel Baudier's *The history of the imperiall estate of the grand seigneurs*, translated into English in 1635. He describes the women of the Sultan's seraglio as falling into “two

71 Okeley, “Ebenezer,” 152.

72 Pitts, Joseph. “A True and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mohammetans, with an Account of the Author's Being Taken Captive (1704),” in *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England*. ed. Daniel J. Vitkus. (New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 2001), 270.

sorts, the one haue had his company and are women, and the others are yet Virgins.”⁷³

Women, denied the chance to establish their own identity through publication of their *own* narratives, are, time and again, identified by the men describing them either as whores or as chaste vessels.

For many Europeans, male and female, the answer to the question of a person’s identity—cultural, religious, and sexual—was in their clothing. As Matar states, “[n]othing revealed conversion and transculturation more than a change in dress.”⁷⁴ In the early modern era, clothing established national identity. Edward Kellett, in the 1627 sermon described above during a service in which a man was doing penance for having turned Turk, took the clothes the man wore when he was rescued as evidence he had not been forced to convert, saying to him:

You went in Turkish-guise, your apparrell proclaimed you to be a Turke, at least in semblance; the exchanging of your ordinarie clothing for the Mahometan you cannot deny, you were seene and taken in it, taken (I heare say) willingly to come to our side, but taken in such an attire as did discriminate you from a Christian; you cannot say, that daily they put on those clothes; you haue publicly confessed, your yeelding to their allurements, rather than to their violence.⁷⁵

Kellett goes on to expound on the manner in which Christians in the New Testament distinguished themselves from “Gentiles” and “Romans” through their distinct,

73 Michel Baudier, *The history of the imperiall estate of the grand seigneurs their habitations, liues, titles ... gouernment and tyranny*, trans. E. G., S. A. (London, 1635), 5.

74 Matar, “Introduction,” 36.

75 Kellett, *Return from Argier*, 31.

unassuming clothing, which they wore as a “badge of humility.”⁷⁶ On the other hand, Kellet links the turban of the Turks to the lewdness and ugliness of “Mahomet,” who he claims used it to cover the signs of his many “foul diseases” in the form of “not onely . . . a Scabbed head, but a Scald pate.”⁷⁷ Turkish clothing is thus linked both to religious conversion and to sexual depravity.

Joseph Pitts knows the significance of clothing when he insists in his own captivity narrative that his Christian and English identity remained despite his being forced to change his clothing. He relates the experience thus:

After my head, with much ado, was shaved, my patroon would have me take off my clothes and put on the Turkish habit. I told him plainly I would not. Whereupon I was forthwith haled away to another tent, in which we kept our provision, where were two men, viz., the cook and the steward, one of the which held me while the other stripped me and put on me the Turkish garb. I all this while kept crying and weeping, and told my patroon that although he had changed my habit, yet he could never change my heart.⁷⁸

This scene is the most emotional of Pitts' narrative. Not even in the scene of his forced conversion to Islam does he portray himself breaking down so completely and feelingly. He uses this harrowing description of the event to gain control of his own story, and thus his own identity, by making it clear just what the circumstances were when he took on the turban, exposing his own inner feelings. This allows him to dodge, at least in some

76 Ibid., 32.

77 Ibid.

78 Pitts, “True and Faithful Account,” 311.

manner, the connection of his clothing to his actual national identity, religious beliefs, or sexual habits.

Men, however, were not the only ones subject to a forced change in clothing, nor were they the only ones to have a change in their clothing connected with sexual promiscuity. Women faced the same trial as men, but didn't have the chance, as Pitts did, to explain their feelings. In the case of Vipra, there is a rare instance of a woman expressing herself on the subject (albeit in the frame of a male narrative), by saying, “[a] Turkish Garment will become me as well as a Spanish Petticoat,” a phrase that implies the same claim to an inner identity—a “me”—that transcends clothing as Pitts does. D'Aranda, however, takes her wardrobe statement as an erotic declaration, inferring from it that she cares for her renegado lover and his favors more than for her country, husband, and religion.

Likewise, in another story found in his narrative, D'Aranda links a woman's change into Turkish garb with her sexual fall from grace. D'Aranda describes the 1641 capture of a Spanish ship and its female passenger by Algerian pirates. The woman, a Spanish concubine, finds herself in the service of the Bassa's wife, who insists that she convert to Islam. When the woman refuses, the Bassa's wife is beside herself with rage, and orders that the woman “receive three hundred blows with a Cudgel.” The Spanish woman still remains firm, at which point, as D'Aranda says:

. . . they stripp'd her of all her cloaths, and gave her others after the Turkish mode; which she put on, but protested publickly in the presence of God, that she took them onely to cover her nakedness, and not upon any change of Religion. This I thought worthy my

observation, to shew the constancy and faith of that
second Magdalen.⁷⁹

The scene is very nearly parallel to Pitts' experience, except for the odd allusion to Mary Magdelene, a woman who, according to religious stories, was a prostitute before miraculously converting to Christianity. Although there is no sign of rape, prostitution, or promiscuity in this story, D'Aranda still uses the metaphor. Turkish clothing is apparently so connected with sexual lust at this time that a chaste and faithful Christian woman dressed as a Turk is identified as a reformed whore.

79 D'Aranda, *History of Algiers*, 121.

Chapter 4: Local English Politics in Early Modern Tales of Female Captivity

D'Aranda's narrative serves as a prominent example of the way in which early modern captivity literature could be used as a tool of nationalism, highlighting captive women's stories of faithfulness or betrayal as a means of identifying the “good” and “bad” sides of international feuds. His narrative, however, is not English, and thus, though it is indicative of the kinds of stories English readers were exposed to during the period, it is not concerned with local, English religious politics. In early modern English dramas, representations of female captivity utilize the same patterns as D'Aranda—with captive women's successes and failures exemplifying the successes and failures of their demographic group—but apply them to local, English issues. National feeling is certainly a part of this trend, but more prominent is the Protestant/Catholic conflict that raged in England throughout the period.

In English dramas depicting captivity, then, the test of virtue enslaved female characters go through is often to be recognized as a larger test of wills between feuding sects. If the captive woman in question gives in to the temptation of Islam and becomes a whore, then her religion's weakness is exposed and proven. On the other hand, if she remains virtuous, and if she brings about a noble and Christian change in the foreigners around her, she is a credit to her sect (as well as sex) and a symbol of its strength. In either case, captive women serve as an illustration and confirmation of stereotypes produced by contemporary religious disputes. This section will focus on this pattern as it exists in early modern English adaptations of the Irene myth, a popular tale of a Greek

maiden taken captive at the siege of Constantinople, especially as it is retold in Lodowick Carlell's *Osmond the Great Turk, or the Noble Servant*.

Lodowick Carlell's *Osmond*, in the rare moments that it has received attention from scholars, has not been examined in light of its portrayal of women captive in Islamicate lands. Central to discussion of *Osmond* in the past has been debate over dating and censorship issues. Friederike Hahn, for example, in a 2007 article printed in *Notes and Queries*, focuses on the play's nearly being denied a license for performance in 1622, probably because of its subversive discussion of regicide. The play, she argues, would have been seen as a real threat to the monarchy in that year, as the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Osmond, had just been murdered as part of an attempted military coup and uprising.⁸⁰ As such, any play on the subject would have merited close examination by state censors, who were under the crown's employ. Joining Hahn in these sentiments regarding the play's subversive discussion of regicide is Richard Dutton, who points out the play's near-censorship in an assertion that courtiers such as Carlell were “in a position to challenge the authority of the Master of the Revels,” allowing them greater ability to perform potentially subversive plays such as *Osmond*.⁸¹

Discussion of *Osmond* as an example of a play that tactfully portrays regicide has been fruitful, but limited. Hahn points out that Carlell cleverly shifts characters' names and titles within the play in order to soften its subject matter, especially as tensions in England were heightened during James I's reign with the Gunpowder and other plots against his person. Carlell, Hahn observes, is careful to shift the name associated with a

80 Friederike Hahn, “One *Osmond the Great Turk*, not Two,” *Notes and Queries*, (London, Oxford University Press, 2007), 35-6.

81 Richard Dutton, *Licensing, censorship and authorship in early modern England: buggeswords*, (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2007), 13-4.

recent regicide—“Osmond”—onto the Emperor's servant and make the King's name “Melcoshus” as a “safeguard against censorship.”⁸² What Hahn and other scholars have not noticed, however, is the significance of another of Carlell's naming choices, that of Melcoshus' romantic interest (and female slave), Despina.

Osmond the Great Turk is one of many early modern plays retelling what might be called the “Irene Myth,” a story first told in English print in William Painter's 1590 publication of *The Palace of Pleasure*. Painter's version of the story tells of a Greek woman, Irene, who is captured by Turks during the taking of Constantinople. She is delivered to the Emperor, Mahomet, who quickly falls in love with her. She at first resists, but eventually gives in to his advances. Eventually, he spends so much time with her that one of his nobles tells him he will be overthrown by his people if he does not separate himself from her. Mahomet then orders his nobles to gather around him, has Irene approach him, and asks the men if they do not think she is beautiful. He demands that they name anyone who could part with something so lovely. The nobles admit that it would take unbelievable willpower to do such a thing, that it has not been and cannot be done, whereupon Mahomet seizes Irene by the hair and slices off her head in one stroke.

This story was retold in George Peele's now lost play *The Turkish Mahomet and Hyrin the Fair Greek* (early 1590s), and again as a poem by William Barksted entitled *Hiren: or the Fair Greek*, in 1611 before Carlell wrote *Osmond*.⁸³ His play, like Peele's and Barksted's works, follows Painter's basic plot. His Irene-like figure, Despina, is captured during the taking of a large, (though unnamed) Greek city and placed in her

82 Hahn, “One *Osmond*,” 35-6.

83 The 1590s is the period in which Peele, who died in 1596, wrote most of his plays. See Reid Barbour, “Peele, George (bap. 1556, d. 1596),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004).

captor's harem. Her beauty and womanly favors distract him from his kingly duties, and she is ultimately slain as a sacrifice to appease his soldiers and nobles. Conscious of the sympathies of a Stuart audience, however, Carlell diverts from the anti-Catholic retellings of Peele and Barksted by portraying Despina in a very positive, sympathetic light. While Peele's and Barksted's Irene-like figures (named "Hyryn" and "Hiren," respectively) represent the worst in women, Carlell seems to have painstakingly assured that Despina represented the best, even in his choice to rename her "Despina."

This change was vital, as the name "Irene" was associated in English histories such as Jean de Hainult's *The State of the Church with the Discourse of Times, from the Apostles Vntill this Present* with St. Irene, a Greek empress who promoted idolatry in the Catholic church, killed her son in order to retain the throne, and dug up and burned the bones of her father-in-law. Hainult's work directly linked St. Irene's promotion of imagery in Christendom with the murder she committed against her son, Constantine, in a very clear condemnation of her religious leanings. As Hainult says, "Hirene had her deuotion towards the virgin Mary, and all other Saints," and

...at the request of Pope Adrian, and of Therasius Arch-bishop of Constantinople, she assembled [...] a Councell at Nice, called the seuenth, [...] Wherin it was decreed, that not only in Temples should be Images: but also that they should be worshipped of right, & that al gainsaiers should be excommunicated."⁸⁴

In Hainult's history, after some controversy in which Irene loses her throne to her son, who has this decree overturned, the Pope steps in on Irene's side, confirming a belief in

⁸⁴ Jean de Hainult, *The estate of the Church with the discourse of times, from the apostles vntill this present*, Simon Patrike, trans. (London, 1602), 222.

images and even sending two Bishops to Spain to promote “the Decree made for Images at the Councill of Niece, by the meanes of Hirene.”⁸⁵ Immediately after establishing “Hirene” as having this prominent role in the promotion of images, Hainult states that, in order to regain the title of Empress, she “sollicited certaine Captaines to kill her sonne,” who “put out his eyes, [...] then put him in prison, where he deceased fewe dayes after.”⁸⁶

In contrast to Hainult's association of Irene with the “Romist” worship of images, or idols, and with a woman whose uncontrollable ambition was a dire threat to the patriarchy, the name “Despina,” is associated in Knolles' 1607 *General History of the Turks* with two Greek women who, though the wives of Islamic rulers, are able to use their influence to “Christianize” their husbands. One of them is the daughter of the Emperor of Trebizond, a kingdom in Asia Minor near Armenia. She is said to have been married to Usuncassan, the King of Persia, in hopes that it would strengthen Trebizond's stance against the conquering Turks. Despina was wed on condition “that [she] should so long as she liued haue the free exercise of her Christian religion,” and Knolles portrays her as having stayed true to that religion.⁸⁷ As he says, Despina had a daughter named Martha who, “instructed by her mother, became a Christian also.” Martha, in turn,

bare [...] a sonne called Hysmael [Ishmael], whom she so much as

she could trained vp in the principles of the Christian religion.

Whereby it came to passe, that afterwards when hee had by rare

fortune obtained the kingdome of PERSIA, he alwaies during his

85 Ibid., 223.

86 Ibid., 224.

87 Richard Knolles, *The generall historie of the Turkes from the first beginning of that nation to the rising of the Othoman familie* (London, 1603), 409.

life had the Christians in good regard, and neuer found fault with their religion.⁸⁸

Thus, Despina is portrayed as having maintained her Christianity despite her new environment and as having successfully Christianized her husband's offspring through her influence. Her role as wife of an Islamic ruler is celebrated as a Christian victory. Thus, the name “Despina,” clearly has far more positive associations in early modern English literature than “Irene.”

There are, then, at least two significant name changes in *Osmond*, both calculated to appease a Stuart court, one from “Osmond” to “Melcoshus,” and the other from “Irene” to “Despina.” *Osmond*, then, is not unique only in its status as a play dealing with regicide. It also holds an unusual place in relation to other dramas featuring European Christian female characters enslaved in the Ottoman Empire. Among several plays of the period with themes of captivity among Muslims, *Osmond*, with its captive Greek woman, Despina, is the only one existing in which a woman's sexual relations with her captor are not fully equated to her turning Turk. Usually, in accordance with the gendered double-standard setup of captivity tales, female captives in early modern dramas had two choices. They were required to either retain their Christianity by remaining virgins (as happens to Alizia and Paulina), or live the sensual life of harem captivity or concubinage fully, turning Turk and whore at the same time (as Paulina pretends to do, and as Eumorphe in the 1632 play, *The courageous Turke, or, Amurath the First: A tragedie*, has already done by the play's beginning). Excepting Carlell and his *Osmond*, playwrights seem to have stuck to equating women's turning Turk with their turning whore. Carlell's play uses the positive historical associations knowledgeable audience members would

88 Ibid., 464.

have had with the name “Despina” to counter the anti-Catholic nature of Peele's and Barksted's retellings of the Irene myth.

That Peele's Irene play was anti-Catholic should come as no surprise. Peele is known to have written Protestantism and anti-Catholicism into other plays of his, such as *The Battle of Alcazar*, and *The Old Wives' Tale*.⁸⁹ Though his *The Turkish Mahomet and Hyrin the Faire Greek* is now lost, references to it in other early modern works seem to suggest that he created a Catholic-like Irene figure who essentially became “the Turkish Mahomet's” whore.⁹⁰ The following, Peele's own description of Hyrin in another of his works, *Merrie conceited iests of George Peele*, makes it very clear what kind of character Hyrin was in this play, saying that his

Christianly pen had writ Finis to the famous Play of the
Turkish Mahamet, and Hyrin the faire Greeke, in Italian called a
Curtezan; in Spaine, a Margerite; in French, vn Curtain; in
England, among the barbarous, a Whore; but among the Gentle,
their vsuall associates, a Puncke.⁹¹

As Peele seems to have done in his now-lost play, Barksted also highlighted both the Catholic-like and the unfaithful nature of his Irene character. His “Hiren,” despite her initial, chaste resistance to her captor's advances, ultimately gives in to the temptation and the promise of wealth and pleasure. When she first meets her captor, Amurath, she

89 Barbour, “Peele, George (bap. 1556, d. 1596).”

90 See William Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part 2*, 2.4.136, Thomas Dekker, *Satiro—mastix. Or The vntrussing of the humorous poet* (London, 1602), I4r; George Chapman, Ben Johnson, and John Marston, *Eastward Hoe* (London, 1605): B3v; Alexander Goughe, *The Queen, or, The excellency of her sex* (London, 1653), D1v; and Philip Massinger, Thomas Middleton, and William Rowley, *The old law, or, A new way to please you* (London, 1656), 47.

91 George Peele, *Merrie conceited iests of George Peele Gentleman sometimes a student in Oxford* (London, 1627), 20.

directly refers to her belief in images in hopes that they will save her, but he attacks this belief, saying

These are but shifts of Friers, tales farre fet.

Dearest, I'lle teach thee my diuinity,

Our Mecha's is [*sic*] not hung with Imagery,

To tell vs of a virgin-bearing-sonne,

Our adoration to the Moone is set,

That pardons all that in the darke is done.⁹²

Hiren's defense to this, in the end, only serves to seal her doom. As she says, “what I prize more precious then imagery, / Heauens, grant the same my bane and ruine be, / And where I liue, wish all my Tragedy.”⁹³ To Protestant English minds, this reliance on “imagery” or “icons” as a guard to virginity would have seemed nothing more than a stubborn idolatry, making Hiren's giving in to Amurath something to be expected, as she would be essentially replacing one false religion with another. Thus, Barksted's highlighting Hiren's trust in “imagery” serves both to separate the harsh realities of her captivity experience from an English, Protestant audience and to direct a subtle jab at the use of icons and images in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.⁹⁴

92 William Barksted, *Hiren: or the Fair Greek* (London, 1607), A6r.

93 Ibid.

94 Although Barksted's poem is published during King James' reign, it is dedicated to Elizabeth de Vere, widow of Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, and to her son, Henry. Though it is difficult to know for sure the religious leanings of these two patrons, several incidents seem to point to their Protestantism. Elizabeth had served for several years as Queen Elizabeth I's Maid of Honour (See Daphne Pearson, *Edward De Vere (1550-1604): The Crisis and Consequences of Wardship* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 171). Also, in 1621, Henry stood with several other nobles opposed to the “Spanish match” of James' son, Prince Charles, and the Infanta of Spain. He was sent to the Tower for a short time for the incident (Victor Stater, “Vere, Henry de, eighteenth earl of Oxford (1593–1625),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

Hiren does indeed fall completely in the course of the poem, first losing her sexual status as a virgin (giving it up completely to a life of pleasure and luxury with the Sultan) and, in the end, losing her life. As a terrible punishment for her faithlessness, she meets a particularly gruesome end. When she is presented to Amurath's men as the paragon of beauty, she fully expects to be exonerated and spared by her newfound lover. Until she is decapitated, she maintains a haughty and proud expression. When her disembodied head is lifted high for all to see, however, her face is frozen in a look of shock and horror at the sudden failure of her chosen strategy for survival.⁹⁵ In her death, then, Protestant belief is exonerated, as Hirens's sexual and spiritual fall is made complete. Her end is too sudden for there to be any chance of her receiving her last rites, so important to those of her Catholic-like faith. Her eternal fate is as hopeless as the look on her face, making her a symbol of warning against trust in imagery or idols.

As Carlell sought licensure for his *Osmond*, this is the kind of literature that he would have to counter to have any success with the crown in his own dramatic career. For Carlell, a courtier in a Stuart court, to take the same route as Peele and Barksted would have been risky indeed. Thus, Carlell evokes comparison to his anti-Catholic predecessors as a tool to highlight Despina's faithful adherence to Christianity. Despina is like all of her predecessors in Irene myth retellings in several ways. She is a woman taken as part of the spoils of a large Greek city. She is a virgin when first captured, and determined to remain so. She is also beautiful, and Melcoshus, *Osmond's* equivalent to Mahomet in the larger myth, is highly attracted to her. However, unlike earlier Irene figures, Despina does not give in to sensual pleasure and luxury. Instead, like her

95 Barksted, *Hiren*, C5r.

historical counterpart, the daughter of the Emperor of Trebizond, she has a “Christianizing” influence over her captor (or lover) and his court.

In a conversation with Osmond in the middle of the play, after a relationship between Melcoshus and Despina has developed, Melcoshus confesses, “her [...] good opinion I strive more to gain, than all the world's; and by those Christian vertues that she proposes too, Faith and Temperance.” A few lines after this, Despina enters the scene, requesting that Melcoshus be merciful to “some of my religion, and your enemies,” presumably Christian prisoners of war, recently captured. He replies immediately, “[t]hough they had plotted against my life, I freely pardon them,” even adding, shockingly, “Mahomet himselfe shall cease to be adored, if he be not assistant to your wishes.”⁹⁶ At the beginning of act four, Despina says to Osmond, Melcoshus' servant, “the Emperour, in my command ore him, makes all the empire subject to my will.” She adds to this a confirmation that “her faith [is] kept sacred to Melcoshus,” meaning that, like her historical counterpart, the daughter of the Emperor of Trebizond, her Christianity remains intact despite her relationship with him (35-6).

As the play progresses, it is clear that their relationship has grown quite deep. Despina eventually confesses to Osmond that it is Melcoshus “whom [...] I in my soul adore” (35-6). By this time in the play, Melcoshus has already declared, “shee's no longer cruell, I have enjoyed her freely, by her own consent.” Thus, Despina's romantic involvement with Melcoshus is shown to have deepened. Yet this is not depicted as a religious fall from grace, but as a great Christian victory. In fact, immediately after Despina's confession of her love for Melcoshus, she tells Osmond, “I have a suit

96 Lodowick Carlell, *The famous tragedy of Osmond the great Turk, otherwise called the noble servant*. (London, 1657), 17-8. Citations to this play from this point on will be in parentheses within the text.

concerning the releasing some poore prisoners for which you from the Emperour must receave order, who strait will visit me,” presumably a reference to more Christians held prisoner within the Empire she requests he set free (30). This suit certainly problematizes any reading of her as a woman who has fully “turned turk.”

Thus, though Despina does “fall” sexually, in the sense of her losing her virginity, Carlell uses unique methods to soften the blow and makes it clear that her Christianity has remained intact. He evokes comparisons to previous, anti-Catholic versions of the myth only to make Despina appear all the more noble and pious. Rather than becoming a kind of reverse “convertite,” Despina almost succeeds in converting her lord, and rather than being portrayed as dying at the height of her sin, as happens to Hiren in Barksted's poem, Despina is described as a Saint, shown to have received the mercy of God after death, and said to have been “the advocate of all those of her faith” (56). As such, Carlell's desire to counter earlier, anti-Catholic versions of the Irene myth appear to have influenced him, unwittingly, to create the only female character captive in Islamicate lands in early modern drama to be exonerated and to remain Christian despite losing her virginity in her captivity.

And yet, despite Carlell's attempts to defend her, to soften the blow of her sexual fall and make her appear Christian, Despina still pays for her relationship with Melcoshus with her death. The forces within the play that cause Despina's downfall reconfirm that in the captivity genre, what matters in the end is still not who a captive woman is internally. What still matters is what she has done outwardly. Elements of Melcoshus' court see her beauty and the sexual interchange between her and the sovereign and judge harshly, smearing her reputation and demanding her sacrifice. In this sense, she is much like the woman described by D'Aranda who, forced to wear Turkish garb, begs heaven to witness

her Christian heart, only to be shortly thereafter described as a reformed whore by the male author of her tale, then dropped from the record entirely. Whatever an enslaved woman might profess to be at her core, that narrative is ultimately dominated by male expectations and stereotypes of women.

Just as the male report of Alizia/Fidelio's supposed tryst with Voadá is blind to the truth behind the matter, interpreting sexual acts with an eye that damns both sides, an element of the court begins to call Despina and Melcoshus' purity into question. Odmer, a servant who Melcoshus says was “brought up with [him as] a child, and many wayes approv'dst [him] selfe faithfull” to his ruler, is both the most bold and the most successful in convincing others of the truth of his accusations (39). He describes Despina as a “Venus,” who has bewitched Melcoshus into “selling [his] honour and the kingdome safety for a few wanton kisses” (38-9, 45). He warns Melcoshus that his soldiers have become traitors, “swearing a captive shall not governe them, they must have one to lead them forth to war” (38). It is these elements, the same elements of male accusation and misinterpretation that arise against Alizia in *The Renegado* and the European women in D'Aranda's narrative, that win out in the end.

Thus, as in other retellings of the Irene myth, Despina is still slain by her newfound lover, though in a scene that plays out in a way that strangely mixes sympathy with harsh justice. Unlike Barksted's Hiren, she is not speechless and shocked in her final moments. Her face is not frozen in unsuspecting horror at a death that has come at the moment she felt at the height of her power. Despina has time to offer one final prayer to God before dying in a kind of emergency last rite (38). The prayer, even more redolent of Catholicism, takes on the form of a confession, much like Alizia's in her final scene. Despina begs forgiveness for her sin, saying “Oh me, my fault lay in my blood, let that

expiate my sin against heaven, mercy, mercy” (46). The prayer, with its admission of guilt and plea for forgiveness, is evidently effective. Evidence of Despina's salvation is given as the play resolves, when, as Osmond is dying, he says, “me thinks I see Despina stand ready to embrace me” (58).

This final scene serves as a dramatic representation of the assimilation of the female captivity experience into a male narrative. Of the two representations of Despina circulating throughout the court, the negative one wins out in dramatic fashion. Even Melcoshus, who believes Despina to be innocent, stabs her in order to clear his name and reestablish his warlike fame and honor. She, ever the ideal, submissive, Christian woman, completes the assimilation by publicly acknowledging her guilt in her final words, words put into her mouth by a male playwright and enacted by an actor, not an actress.

In a very real way, Despina's tale is not hers to tell. Even Osmond's heavenly vision of her is a form of assimilation—an assertion that the confession worked, that it was necessary, that the elements of the court that are most suspicious of the woman's presence and power were correct, at least in some sense, in their accusations. In the end, what saves Despina is her denial of an assertive womanly power and role, shedding it and leaving it behind, fully assimilating and adapting to men's representations of her both internally and externally. In a sense, it is only by acknowledging that she is a whore that she can be made a virgin, or a pure soul in paradise. Thus, Despina, as a woman in a male-authored captivity genre, a genre devoted time and again to the defense of men's identities, can only achieve salvation, or (to use a word more suited to captivity) redemption, through submission to the male narrative.

Conclusion

The actual experiences of women captive in Barbary and the Ottoman Empire were drastically different from representations of their experiences available back home in England. Their stories were molded into a broader, patriarchal narrative that placed them in the context of a male understanding of female instability and inconstancy. Thus a clear double standard in the captivity genre developed. Where men in captivity were at times able to assert their identity through stories of escape and resistance, women, who never had the opportunity to write or dictate a published defense of themselves in such circumstances, were typically portrayed as hopeless causes from the start, prone to giving in to the persuasions of their captors. Where men in captivity frequently used Joseph's righteous rejection of the advances of Potiphar's wife as a biblical metaphor for their experiences in captivity, women had no such positive image. For men, captivity was portrayed as a challenge to the Christian identity. For women, captivity was largely synonymous with sexual and religious conversion.

Many early modern female captive characters remain to be explored in light of the gendered double standard of the captivity genre described in this study. For example, Bess in Thomas Heywood's *Fair Maid of the West* has moments of both captivity and near captivity in North Africa as Mullisheg, the King of Fez, both woos her and tries to force her to be his concubine. She, however, is aided by an entourage of Christian men who secure her escape in perhaps another commentary on the appropriate means of female resistance. Bess's ability to come out of her experience unscathed also appears to be motivated by a nationalistic desire to avoid a tragic ending for a captive English woman on stage.

Even Desdemona in Shakespeare's *Othello* can be seen as a captive figure and is literally read as such by her own father, Brabantio, who hints as much in his first line directed at Othello: "O thou foul thief, where hast thou stow'd my daughter?"⁹⁷ As the wife of a Moorish man, the parallels between Desdemona and the concubines of other dramas are apparent. A closer analysis may reveal that it is in part this similarity of her status to that of women captive in Islamic lands that renders her suspect in the eyes of the men around her. Like many women in captivity stories, Desdemona, as Othello falsely but naively says, "can turn, and turn, and yet go on, / And turn again."⁹⁸ Thus even this well-known character of Shakespeare's falls victim to the gendered double standard of the captivity genre.

97 1.2.63.

98 4.1.250-1.

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