

The Oriental Captivity Narrative and Early English Fiction

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While colonial and postcolonial issues have generated much recent literary scholarship on the nineteenth and twentieth-century novel, the relationship between empire and the earlier development of the English novel has not received the attention it deserves. This is particularly surprising when we consider the enormous expansion of British power during the eighteenth century and the period's wealth of novels commenting or focusing on alien lands. Nevertheless, recent studies of the generic predecessors of the English novel, even as they revise, extend, and complicate Ian Watt's seminal formulation of the novel's origins, still tend to downplay empire in their emphasis on English domesticity, English class formation, empirical epistemology, and an implicitly English psychological interiority.¹ Although students of eighteenth-century literature have begun to explore issues of empire in increasing depth, they have generally explored the relationship between the novel and British colonial expansion by reading individual texts, especially *Oroonoko* and

1 Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957). For epistemology and class, see Lennard Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); and Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987). J. Paul Hunter has identified a wide range of textual genres which anticipated the novel's construction of self and world; see *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York: Norton, 1990). For domesticity, see Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

Robinson Crusoe.² The candidacy of these texts for the position of "first novel" has contributed to broadly theorized but insufficiently illustrated claims about British imperialism and the origins of the English novel, particularly in terms of a connection between the discursive strategies of empire and the novel's reliance on a voice of realistic, factual, or empirical authority.³ If we shift our attention, however, from individual texts to generic patterns, we can find much more concrete and extensive connections between the early novel and colonialist strategies of discursive domination.



One important connection developed as early English novelists borrowed, intensified, and recast the plot structures, individualistic heroism, and colonialist agenda of the Oriental captivity narrative. Published frequently in England from the late sixteenth century until the end of the eighteenth century, factual narratives of Oriental captivity record the experiences of Europeans captured and enslaved in various Islamic states, especially the corsair enclaves of the Barbary coast. Usually merchants and seamen, the captives voice indignant denunciations of the "despotic" and "barbaric" peoples who have interrupted their trade in alien waters. As the captives describe their subjugation to foreign masters, their isolation from home within an alien environment, and their self-reliant efforts to regain native "English liberties," their voices of individualistic autonomy take shape against a detailed representation of the Orient as debased and despotic. Both the debased Oriental setting and the plot of subjugation and escape enforce an expansionist ideology by suggesting that autonomous and self-reliant Western captives possess a natural right and ability to resist and control the alien cultures that have enslaved them. Following this narrative pattern, such writers as Penelope Aubin and

2 Exceptions include work on anti-slavery novels, such as Wylie Sypher, *Guinea's Captives Kings: British Anti-Slavery Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), pp. 257–316; and Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670–1834* (New York: Routledge, 1992). Percy Adams's focus on the connections between novel and travel writing in general tends to downplay the specific impact of colonial expansion; see *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1983).

3 Lennard Davis, *Resisting Novels: Ideology and Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987), pp. 52–85, and "The Fact of Events and the Event of Facts: New World Explorers and the Early Novel," *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 32 (1991), 240–55; Firdous Azim, *The Colonial Rise of the Novel* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 37; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), pp. 69–79.

William Rufus Chetwood produced a series of lengthy and popular fictions, especially in the early part of the eighteenth century, a period of expansion and consolidation for both the British nation and the English novel. As these fictions adopt the Orientalist methodology of the factual genre, they develop more elaborate versions of the captive protagonist, producing a range of character types, whether male or female, mercantile or noble, who seem to personify Western freedom, self-assertion, and ingenuity. In its broad potential for celebrating characters who embody individualistic and colonialist ideologies, the Oriental captivity plot provides an effective resource for assessing colonialism's interaction with patterns of identity formation crucial to the early evolution of the English novel.

In addition to inspiring specific fictional imitations, the factual narrative of Oriental captivity represents an important generic precursor of the eighteenth-century novel, especially for dominant late-century genres such as the virtue-in-distress narrative, the Gothic novel, and the *Bildungsroman*. Like these genres, the captivity plot defines subjective identity against an alien, oppositional environment, which threatens and tests the subject's insularity and equilibrium, and which calls forth the subject's powers of personal and social mastery.⁴ Throughout the seventeenth century, factual accounts of captivity in Barbary employed what would soon become a central feature of novelistic narrative authority, as G.A. Starr has suggested, since they developed a persistent type of "narrator-hero" who recounts his efforts to escape with an even-handed tone, a wealth of circumstantial detail, and reflections on past experience in the manner of spiritual autobiography.⁵ Moreover, the captive narrators recount in detail the tensions of their inner lives, their efforts to maintain an insular integrity, an adherence to Christianity, and a secret agenda of escape, despite the threats of despair and discovery. Finally, as the captives master the alien circumstances of the Orient for their own advantage, whether for escape or profit, they simultaneously develop powers of self-control, self-preservation, and self-reliance, and their narratives confirm this expression of progressive ideology through explicit comments supporting economic and political individualism.

A similar connection between captivity narrative and novel underscores Nancy Armstrong and Lennard Tennenhouse's recent presentation

4 John Bender has discussed the eighteenth-century novel's general concern with confinement as a means of rationally reforming the subject; see *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

5 G.A. Starr, "Escape from Barbary: A Seventeenth-Century Genre," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 29 (November 1965), p. 35.

of the case for the "American Origins of the English Novel," which contends that Mary Rowlandson's American captivity narrative represents an important precedent for *Pamela*, since both texts confirm the textual authority of an isolated, persecuted, non-aristocratic English female in opposition to an alien and threatening environment.⁶ This focus on the American context, however, obscures the wider frame of British expansion overseas and the potential of captivity narratives from a variety of locations for affecting the production of English fictions. Much more than the American captivity genre, the Oriental captivity plot offered eighteenth-century novelists a popular formula for the elaboration of personal identity, with a greater potential impact on the early English novel. Separately published accounts of Britons in Oriental captivity entered the print marketplace as early as 1587, much earlier than their American counterparts, and continued to appear regularly thereafter.⁷ Over the course of the eighteenth century, the American captivity plot inspired a number of brief novelistic episodes, whereas the Oriental plot led to earlier, more extensive, and more popular fictional imitations. After an early episode in *The English Rogue* (1665) and widely read episodes in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Don Quixote*, the Oriental plot reached centre stage in the fictions of Aubin and Chetwood. Oriental captivity furnishes the main narrative thread for three of Aubin's popular novels, beginning in 1721, as well as lengthy episodes in two others, thus animating a body of fiction that scholars have generally described as an important precursor for Richardson's novels and a crucial element in the shift in English fiction away from amatory plots and towards piety, "virtue," and psychological interiority.⁸ Captivity in Algiers provides the primary plot line for Chetwood's *Adventures of Robert Boyle* (1726), which at twenty-three

6 Nancy Armstrong and Lennard Tennenhouse, "The American Origins of the English Novel," *American Literary History* 4 (1992), 386–410; rpt. *The Imaginary Puritan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 196–216.

7 For overviews of the factual Barbary accounts, see Starr, pp. 35–52; and Paul Baepler, "The Barbary Captivity Narrative in Early America," *Early American Literature* 30 (1995), 95–120. Baepler argues that British accounts of Barbary captivity provided an important precedent for the American captivity genre, while Starr provides a good indication of their variety and popularity and some indication of Britain's broad cultural awareness of Barbary slavery. Neither, however, fully documents the flurry of Oriental captivity narratives that appeared around the turn of the seventeenth century. See, for example, *A true discription ... of a most lamentable voyage, made latelie to Tripolie in Barbarie...* (London: Richard Iones, for Edward White, 1587); Richard Hasleton, *Strange and wonderfull things ... in his ten yeares trauales in many forraine countries...* (London: A[bel] I[effes], 1595); and Edward Webbe, *The rare and most vnderfull things ... seene and passed in his troublesome trauales ...* (London: by J. Wolfe for William Wright, 1590).

8 See, for example, John J. Richetti, *Popular Fiction before Richardson: Narrative Patterns, 1700–1739* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), pp. 216–29. For influence on Richardson, see William H. McBurney, "Penelope Aubin and the Early English Novel," *Huntington Literary Quarterly* 20 (1957), 245–67; Wolfgang Zach, "Mrs. Aubin and Richardson's Earliest Literary Manifesto

printings represents one of the century's most successful fictions of colonial adventure and certainly its most popular narrative of captivity under a foreign people. Chetwood also included shorter episodes of Oriental captivity in two less popular novels.⁹ In the 1720s the Oriental captivity narrative furnished one of most prominent plot formulae of extended subjugation and individualist triumph, amid a fictional landscape dominated by the picaresque and love intrigues. In this decade Eliza Haywood also experimented with the Oriental plot, as did such writers as Simon Berington and Robert Bage later in the century.¹⁰ At the end of the century, during a comparable period of nation and literature-building across the Atlantic, a brief resurgence of factual Barbary narratives led to Royall Tyler's *Algerine Captive* (1797) and other fictional imitations.¹¹

In an effort to gauge how these fictions adapt and transform the captivity plot, I will concentrate here on a few factual accounts and the fictional versions of Aubin and Chetwood. While Chetwood intensifies the captivity plot's ideology of masterful individualism and colonial expansion, Aubin considers a wider range of captive protagonists, especially women, aristocrats, and priests, who embody this ideology in a more subdued form. Both writers complicate the subjective depths of their captives by sharpening the focus on their internal tensions, conflicts, and transgressions. Both also introduce elements of romance, defining idealized Western sexual subjects through images of Oriental lust and through dramas of besieged chastity like those of Richardson's novels, with a similar emphasis on individual freedom of marriage choice. Thus the fictions of Aubin and Chetwood produce early versions of several crucial patterns of character development within subsequent English fiction, precisely through a complication of the Oriental captivity genre's basic narrative pattern of an individual's exposure to, isolation within, and resistance to an alien and oppressive environment. With further extensions, complications, and revisions, this pattern continues to animate the

(1739)," *English Studies* 62 (1981), 271–85; and Jerry C. Beasley, *Novels of the 1740s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982), pp. 163–66.

9 William Rufus Chetwood, *The Voyages, Dangerous Adventures, and Imminent Escapes of Captain Richard Ruffin* (London: Chetwood et. al., 1720; New York: Garland, 1973); *The Voyages, Travels and Adventures of William Owen Gwin Vaughan ...* (London: J. Watts, 1736; New York: Garland, 1972).

10 Haywood includes episodes in *Idalia* (1725), *Philidore and Placentia*, and *The Fruitless Enquiry* (1727). See also Berington, *The Memoirs of Sig^r Gaudentio di Lucca* (1737), and Bage, *The Fair Syrian* (1787).

11 James R. Lewis, "Savages of the Seas: Barbary Captivity Tales and Images of Muslims in the Early Republic," *Journal of American Culture* 13 (1990), 75–84. For a discussion of early American dramas that employ the Barbary plot, see Benilde Montgomery, "White Captives, African Slaves: A Drama of Abolition," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 27 (1994), 615–30.

English novel, whether we consider Pamela's confinement in the various houses of Mr B., the London peregrinations of David Simple or the Man of Feeling, Evelina's experiences in the fashionable world, or Emily St Aubert's confinement at Udolpho. A significant moment in the development of English fiction occurred when the popular fictions of Aubin and Chetwood, produced during such critical years for the development of the English novel, adapted the colonialist discursive strategies of the Oriental captivity narrative for male and female versions of the persecuted yet autonomous protagonist.



Such models of Western identity could emerge so forcefully within the captivity plot because it developed them at least partially through an Orientalist framework. In Edward Said's formulation, Orientalism combines geography and ethnography in a totalizing description of various Islamic lands, under the broad rubric of the "Orient," based especially on negative and alienating images of local peoples, religion, government, social customs, and even climate—all of which serve to create an impression of the cultural superiority and potential colonial mastery of the West. While Said's analysis concentrates on academic and literary discourses of the nineteenth century, he also traces Orientalism's roots in the centuries-long struggle between Islam and Christianity, and certainly the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed increasingly elaborate strategies of discursive domination parallel to the West's increasing economic and political intervention in various eastern lands. Although the totalizing concept of "the Orient" belongs more properly to the nineteenth century, British writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries employed Orientalism's hierarchical framework and many of its standard stereotypes in describing broad sections of Islamic territory, including the North African coast, Turkey, Persia, and parts of India. Moreover, throughout the early modern period, images of excessively passionate, ineffectual, and despotic Muslims helped to define and elaborate the Western self as a stable, rational, and free political subject. Within early modern travel descriptions of Oriental lands, such images established a consistent opposition between, on the one hand, the rational mastery of self and alien world revealed in the traveller's knowledge about and resistance to the Orient, and, on the other hand, the imputed features of the Orient and Orientals, traits that seem to disqualify them for such mastery.¹² By suggesting that the autonomous Western subject possessed

12 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

a natural aptitude for knowing and ruling lands seemingly racked by political injustice and ineptitude, these proto-Orientalist accounts created a justification and even an imperative for Western colonial expansion.

The Orientalist vision of the Islamic world provided the ideological structure of the Barbary captivity narrative even as this genre provided in its turn crucial illustrations for some of the most prominent Orientalist stereotypes. The British saw the Coast as a bewildering chaos of petty states and tribal powers, all more or less dependent on the Ottoman empire, and full of a bewildering variety of peoples: Arabs, Berbers, Moors, Turks, Jews, African and Balkan slaves, even a fair number of "renegadoes," or Western converts to Islam. British travel writers tended to lump these peoples together under the broad headings "Turk" and "Moor," portraying such peoples as altogether given to tyranny, cruelty, lust, chicanery, immoderate passion, and superstition.¹³ This negative outlook developed at least partly in response to the capture and enslavement of Europeans in Turkey and Barbary. Early modern descriptions of the Middle East and North Africa often came from the pens of captives or ambassadors working to secure the release of captives. The former Algerian captive Joseph Pitts, for example, produced a highly influential travelogue in his *True and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mohammetans* (1704), which stood for many years as the only first-hand English description of Mecca. By the early eighteenth century, tens of thousands of Britons had entered Oriental captivity, mostly in North African ports such as Sallee, Algiers, and Tunis. In these city-states British captives sometimes gained freedom through ransom, but often faced lengthy servitude and occasionally even galley slavery, torture, coercion to embrace Islam, or confinement in the seraglio.¹⁴ Thus reports of enslaved Britons contributed to the characterization of North Africa as a land of despotism, religious zeal, and sexual predation.

For the British as for other early modern European peoples, the corsairs represented a particular threat to the spread of empire and commerce. Although the British, like other Western trading nations, routinely sold captured Muslims in Mediterranean slave markets, British writers tended to downplay Western predations while describing the peoples of Barbary

13 For an historical account of Barbary in this period, see John Wolf's *The Barbary Coast: Algiers under the Turks, 1500 to 1830* (New York: Norton, 1979). For further scholarship on British images of the Orient, see Brandon H. Beck, *From the Rising of the Sun: English Images of the Ottoman Empire to 1715* (New York: P. Lang, 1987); Sari J. Nasir, *The Arabs and the English* (New York: Longman, 1979); and Samuel Claggett Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England during the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937).

14 For historical scholarship on Christian slaves, see Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Wolf, pp. 151-74.

as devoted to slavery and plunder and inherently hostile to trade. From the late sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, the corsairs grew increasingly independent of the Ottomans, interrupting Britain's growing trade in the Levant and even harrying the crucial route through the Atlantic islands to the American colonies, the African slaving districts, and the Indian factories. Like the other Western colonial powers, Britain sent several punitive expeditions to the Barbary coast and managed occasionally to control strategic ports, such as Tangier from 1662 to 1683 and Gibraltar from 1704, beginning a pattern of regional intervention that culminated with direct imperial control of Egypt.

Thus at least partially driven by colonial imperatives, the Barbary captivity narrative adopted the aggressively antagonistic and totalizing epistemological stance characteristic of Orientalism. Both factual and fictional accounts conflate Turks with Moors, Arabs with Egyptians, and both create detailed specifications of Oriental customs, behaviours, and inclinations, representing these cultures as inverted models or parodies of Western civilization. Within the figure of the captive narrator, these texts connect a scientific subject that can know the Orient with a heroic subject that preserves itself against the threat of the Orient. The epistemological and psychological position of the captive, as Mary Louise Pratt has suggested, closely resembles that of the ethnographer, and captivity narratives in general occupy an important place in the evolution of early modern travel literature.¹⁵ The very alienation and insularity that the captives experience as unwilling travellers reinforce their adoption of distant, observational, scientific subject positions in relation to the Orient. Like many modern Western commentators on the non-Western world, the captives employ what Said has described as a central feature of Orientalism, its "absolutely anatomical and enumerative" framework, its "particularizing and dividing of things Oriental into manageable parts," parts easily understood, domesticated, and dominated.¹⁶ Within the hierarchical framework of travel description, a captive describes an Oriental land by dividing it into such categories as geography, religion, military defences, and marriage customs. This kind of loco-descriptive method structures part 2 of Francis Knight's factual *Relation of Seaven Yeares Slaverie under the Turkes of Argeire* (1640), which analyses Algeria by

15 See Mary Louise Pratt, "Fieldwork in Common Places," *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 38.

16 Said, *Orientalism*, p. 72. For a development of this position with reference to travel writing more generally, see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

dividing it into sections on government, military forces, "Inhabitants," "Lands," and "Riches," and which offers detailed charts of local political officials and of towns paying tribute to Algiers.¹⁷ Travel description is so important for Oriental captivity narratives that it can command huge portions of text, even titles. Such a lengthy description fills the account of Pitts that the text gives comparatively little space to his personal sufferings. After a brief recital of his capture, Pitts continually digests Algeria and Arabia into an easily managed anatomical structure, cataloguing towns along the African coast, shrines along the pilgrimage to Mecca, and the schedule of daily Muslim prayer. Similar authenticating devices also support the fictional accounts. Interrupting Chetwood's fictional *Adventures of Robert Boyle* is a long section of travel description, which analyses Morocco through a catalogue of towns and sections on religion, government, and ethnography. When his *Adventures of William Vaughan* (1736) turns to an episode of captivity in Tunis, it includes several footnotes explaining details of Tunisian geography, economy, religion, and dress.

The epistemological framework of Orientalism provides one of several means by which these narratives assert the captives' potential mastery over the captive-taking cultures. In so far as a captivity narrative records a Briton's subjugation at the hands of a supposedly inferior culture, it creates a sense of cultural imbalance, a violation of the imagined national hierarchy that placed Western cultures above Eastern cultures. But in the very fact of its publication, a captivity narrative marks the restoration of this imbalance by implying both the happy ending of the captive's release and the possibility of knowing and recording the captive-taking culture. On occasion a narrative literalizes the captive's mastery over this culture by showing that his knowledge contributes to British naval power and trade. In Thomas Phelps's account (1685), after escaping from a Moroccan port and encountering an English warship, he boldly proposes a plan to guide the English into port so that they can set fire to the local navy.¹⁸ Within such accounts, captive-taking cultures create an imperative for British territorial intervention, just as the captive's personal subjugation, in facilitating an intellectual mastery of such cultures, grants him a position of colonial authority and leadership. Other forms of personal mastery, further implying a restoration of national hierarchy and the potential for colonial mastery, also result from the situation of Oriental

17 Francis Knight, *A Relation of Seaven Yeares Slaverie under the Turkes of Argeire...* (London: T. Cotes, 1640).

18 Thomas Phelps, *A True Account of the Captivity of Thomas Phelps at Machaness in Barbary, and of His Strange Escape ...* (London: H. Hills, 1685).

captivity, especially in the captives' resistance to the putative inferiorities of the Orient, and in the mastery of self and alien land which enables their escape from cultures which, as these narratives suggest, can only temporarily subjugate them.

As the captive narrators marshal the oft repeated stereotypes of Orientalist discourse, they create an impression of their own superiority to and distance from Oriental culture. In a factual account of 1670, T. Smith insists in the blunt language of Orientalist generalization that the Algerians "are very superstitious, and listen very much to the Reports and Whimsies of their Soothsayers," who "make a great advantage of the Peoples Folly."¹⁹ This stereotype forms a sharp contrast with his own rationalized piety and strict adherence to Christianity in the face of his master's proselytism and the temptations of wealth and women. His individual experience also correlates with Western stereotypes about Oriental sexual depravity, such as when he claims that the seraglio leads Algerian women to a "wandering" sexuality that takes "pleasure in variety" and renders them "furiously debauch'd." This imputed feature of the Orient affects the merchant personally as he resists a variety of sexual advances, "tricks and inventions," especially since he fears that these "were but Designes to ensnare me, and oblige me to Apostacie."²⁰ When captive narrators depict Barbary as a land of temptations, corruptions, and threats, their own personalities coalesce in terms of active self-fortification against the features of their surroundings. The captives' appearance of rational superiority and cultural insularity receives further support from common Orientalist generalizations about native dispositions to sloth, luxuriousness, hypocrisy, thievery, inebriation, and sexual relations between males.

But the most crucial ideological connection between the captive's individual experience and Orientalist stereotypes concerns the topoi of liberty, slavery, and despotism. Narrators of Barbary captivity cite their personal experiences in slavery as instances of a widespread, seemingly natural disposition towards tyranny. Central to their construction of the Orient is the image of a petty tyrant, a debased, debauched, and despotic master, surrounded by equally debased, servile, and ineffectual lackeys. Together these figures form a hierarchy of misrule that offers a sharp contrast to the civilization, rationality, and effectiveness that appear in the captive narrator. In the standard language of Orientalist vituperation, Phelps's account describes the emperor of Morocco as a "Monster of Africk, a composition of Gore and Dust, whom nothing can atone

19 T. S[mith], *The Adventures of an English Merchant...* (London: Moses Pitt, 1670), p. 146.

20 S[mith], pp. 204-6.

but humane Sacrifices," while even an "inconsiderable circumstance, will raise such a caprice in the Emperours Noddle, without any other provocation, as to endanger all the Heads before him."²¹ Such a seemingly natural disposition for tyranny and injustice, according to Smith, undermines Algerian civilization: "The great swallow the little ones, as Fishes; they feed upon them, and from their Labours derive a maintenance to their idle Bodies: a sad encouragement to Laziness and Vice, and the grand Cause of the Disorders of [the] Nation."²² With its close connections between despotism, idle leadership, political chaos, and a debased civilization, this common nexus of Orientalist stereotypes provides a backdrop against which the captive's relentless drive for escape embodies a seemingly natural freedom and self-reliant energy. As Armstrong and Tennenhouse suggest in relation to Rowlandson, "The captive's ability to return to the fold depends entirely on qualities of mind that resist illegitimate forms of domination."²³ The narrator's negative portrait of Oriental culture implies a positive characterization of the British, transforming his personal characteristics into national ones, so that he seems to embody the inborn freedom and individualism of his people.

In depicting the captives' personal mastery of the Orient, the factual narratives connect the alien-dominating subject of Orientalist observation with the free, enterprising, and self-distanced subject of political and economic individualism. As the captives try to escape Oriental slavery, the texts reinforce their efforts with explicit endorsements of the British systems of limited monarchy and mercantile capitalism, which are themselves reinforced by explicit condemnations of the political and socio-economic practices of the Orient. The narrators often complain of their slavery in the economic language of individualistic ideology, especially as they express a desire to keep the earnings of their labour. In the escape narrative of John Rawlins, for example, the hero resorts to such language in order to persuade his companions to resist their captors:

Oh hellish slavery to bee thus subject to dogs! to labour thus to inrich infidels, and maintaine their pleasures, to be our selves slaves, and worse then the out-cast of the world: is there no way of releasement? no devise to free us from this bondage? no exploit, no action of worth to bee put in execution, to make us renowned in the world, and famous to posteritie?²⁴

21 Phelps, pp. 8-9.

22 S[mith], p. 46.

23 Armstrong and Tennenhouse, p. 398.

24 [John Rawlins], *The Famous and Wonderful Recoverie of a Ship of Bristoll, called the Exchange, from the Turkish Pirates of Argier...* (London: Nathaniel Butter, 1622), Sig. B4v.

By creating an opposition between Western industry and Oriental luxury, the passage enforces the value of individual "labour" and the need to seek opportunities for effective action and personal renown.

As the captives recount the hardships of their slavery and their efforts to escape, they construct themselves as abducted from their native environment but still adhering to its rationalism and intellectual dexterity, qualities that appear positive, necessary, and natural within the alterity and threat of Oriental settings. Under the various pressures of slavery, the captives often mask hidden motives and attitudes towards their captors, adapt local objects for useful ends, and even develop entrepreneurial skills. When the captives hide their internal intentions, secretly contrive escape plans, and deceive their captors with elaborate subterfuges, the narratives depict guile and dissimulation as positive Western traits, often contrasted with portraits of Oriental captors as easily deceived dupes. Constant emphasis on the captives' efforts to maintain false appearances and inner resolves creates an impression of psychological tensions and difficulties, suggesting a complex world of Western consciousness, juxtaposed against a seemingly simple Orient, easily known and mastered. In their efforts to escape, the captives exhibit what Starr describes as a pattern of enterprise and mental "improvisation," a dexterous manipulation of the alien circumstances of Oriental environments.²⁵ In Rawlins's escape narrative, for example, the hero spends long hours assessing his surroundings, forming careful plans, and waiting for opportunities, before he finally escapes by imprisoning his captors with some ordinary crowbars. Moreover, Rawlins introduces this account of dexterous mechanical heroism with a dedication celebrating the improvisational skills of the artisan, "ready for all impositions," as an important contribution to the English nation.²⁶

In the most developed portrait of the English captive as dexterous mercantile hero, William Okeley's 1675 narrative depicts a protagonist whose individualistic drive and subjective complexity appear in sharp contrast to opposing tendencies in his Algerian captors. Okeley attributes a hypocritical self-indulgence to his captors, dismissing the custom of fasting as a mask for an inner compulsion to "Riot," "Rage," "Lust," and gluttony.²⁷ While he thus depicts Orientals as superstitious and unable to control bodily impulses, he characterizes himself as a rational and resourceful

25 Starr, p. 38.

26 [Rawlins], Sig. A3r.

27 William Okeley, *Eben-ezer: or, a small Monument of Great Mercy ...* (London: Nat. Ponder, 1675), p. 27. References are to this edition.

Englishman, who adapts to varied occupations in Algiers, as a seaman and a weaver. Later he transforms himself into a successful trader in tobacco and wine, arriving at such a pitch of entrepreneurial acumen that he can advise another English slave about methods of earning a living. Within his account, the circumstances of Barbary captivity and the urge to escape create a complex world of enterprising, improvisational thought. A complaint about the economic circumstances of slavery leads directly to careful deliberation on modes of escape: "it was difficult to raise increase out of no stock, and to pay Interest out of no Principal; but there was no contending: It cost me much Debate with my self, and I turn'd my thoughts into all forms and shapes" (p. 17). Deprived of favourable economic conditions, the merchant becomes an escape artist, whose enterprise involves a complex process of mental adaptation to a wide range of external situations. Like Rawlins, Okeley relies on individualistic ideology in order to move his fellow captives to constructive action, as he argues that captivity compels two alternatives, either active self-assertion, or a contemptible acceptance of "Bondage" under an Oriental master: "Let us be up and doing, and God would be with us. To begin is one half of our work: Let us make an Essay, and Answer particular Objections as they Offer'd themselves, and as we met with them in our work" (p. 50). Okeley rejects his companions' passivity with a manifesto of improvisation, depicting "work" as a largely unplanned process of adaptation to fit varying circumstances. When he pursues this method in the construction of a boat, he makes oars out of "pipe-staves" (p. 57), and the boat's construction and transportation engross over 10 per cent of the text. Far from mere filler, this mechanical activity provides a crux of dramatic tension and heroic triumph. Moreover, such resourcefulness, with its mastery of the external circumstances of an alien culture, appears as a natural and inevitable response to the circumstances of captivity.

In addition to his resourcefulness, other complexities of Okeley's personality also take shape against the seemingly uncomplicated threat of the alien Orient, especially as he struggles to conceal his escape plan and to create a deceptive façade for his captors. On one occasion, when the observation of a spy forces him to dissemble his efforts to escape, he recognizes the difficulty of masking his internal design, and he wonders, "how boldly could I hold up my Head to this Spie [?] the Reflection of my Conscience was enough to write Guilt in my Countenance ... and this had betray'd me, had I not suddenly pluckt up my Spirits" (p. 58). Here, as in the captivity narrative more generally, many opportunities for development of an opposition between external "Countenance"

and internal "Conscience" result from the dramatic tensions of captivity, the need for dissembling, and the threat of discovery. Such dissembling often results from the captives' adherence to Christianity in the face of proselytism and persecution. Like other Oriental captives, Okeley finds comfort in the thought that slaves can still "enjoy the freedom of their own Consciences," although his "whole outward man is in Bondage" (p. 14). This constant play with oppositions between liberty and slavery, internal consciousness and external appearance, contributes depth to Okeley's construction of a narrated self. With its concern for liberty, economic individualism, and the foil of the Oriental, his account, like other Barbary captivity narratives of the seventeenth century, offered a complicated and appealingly nationalist model of English identity, opening an ample field for experimentation within fictional adaptations.



The most popular and faithful of these adaptations, Chetwood's *Robert Boyle*, increases both the subjective complexity and the individualist drive of the captive protagonist, again by defining him against an Orientalized setting.²⁸ Far from an experience of abjection, captivity transforms the young Boyle into a masterful colonialist hero, especially since before his capture he appears an unprepossessing, somewhat inept youth. He first leaves England when a wicked uncle, in order to steal his inheritance, sells him into American indentured service, and he enters Barbary captivity when he falls overboard during his transport ship's successful repulse of a Sallee rover. Boyle's abject entry into captivity deprives him even of national companions in suffering, but the novel transforms this isolated capture into an opportunity for heroic self-assertion, as he decides that Oriental slavery offers greater chances for a return home than a more distant servitude in America. This shift from American servitude to a seemingly less threatening and less final captivity in Algiers suggests that the Orient provides a more easily handled field of opportunities for the enterprising young captive or colonist in the making.

Moreover, Boyle's servitude involves no recital of squalid accommodations and hard labour but rather opportunities to assume mastery over the alien, as Chetwood sharpens the captivity narrative's opposition between the protagonist's mechanical skills and the luxurious decadence

28 William Rufus Chetwood, *The Voyages and Adventures of Captain Robert Boyle ...* (London: John Watts, 1726; New York: Garland, 1972). References are to this edition. Richetti has described Boyle as a Crusoe-like example of "the resourceful European artisan-technician" (p. 212).

of his captors. Since the novel identifies Boyle as a former watchmaker and the orphan son of a West Indian merchant-captain, it suggests that inborn mechanical skills, if not a colonial family background, enable him to master the alien circumstances of Barbary captivity. His first task in Oriental servitude involves restoration of an "indifferently kept" garden, as his master laments the "want of a Gardener," and Boyle confidently offers to adapt himself to the position despite his lack of experience (p. 27). The text devotes several pages to his "Plans" for improvement and repair, including his direction of his master's Moorish servants, his importation of "European Seeds and Roots," and his restoration of a fountain with statues drawn from Greek mythology (pp. 28-29). After the garden's completion, both the incapable master and his superstitious "Workmen were astonish'd to see with what Expedition I had compleated it, and imagin'd I had dealt with the Devil" (pp. 29, 43). In presenting this restoration of the garden to its original European splendour, the text projects an image of the decay of Western design under Oriental caretaking. Moreover, the incident suggests that captivity calls forth the resourceful Englishman's seemingly natural and interrelated skills in adapting himself to an alien environment, managing mechanical projects, ruling Oriental servants, and reshaping Oriental land.

While Boyle himself appears as a rational and enterprising captive hero, the novel constructs an intricate foil for him in his master, Hamet, a far more complex villain than the tyrannical captors of the factual accounts. As an Irish renegado, Hamet represents an alternative version of the Western self, a Briton thoroughly saturated by the imputed vices of the Orient, made weak, credulous, and rapacious by contact with the corrupting influence of institutions such as slavery and the seraglio. In contrast with the self-reliant Boyle, Hamet is surrounded by ineffectual servants, both natives and other renegadoes, who share his superstition, gullibility, and inability to control their bodily impulses. Whereas the renegado's subscription within native culture seems to render him unfit for management of his servants, Boyle's oppositional insularity seems to enable his mastery over the natives and thus to suggest that resistance to native culture represents a precondition for British colonial mastery of the Orient.

The novel most sharply opposes Boyle's masterful subjective depths and Hamet's limiting acculturation through the introduction of a romance plot, which involves the captive's passion for an English slave, Mrs Villars, confined in the renegado's harem and subject to his seductions

and threats. Captivity seems to call forth not only Boyle's colonial aptitude but also his sexual energies. Before his capture, he "never ... had the least Regard to any of the Female Sex," but after Hamet's servants confine him in order to keep him from the harem, one glimpse of Mrs Villars in a "Turkish Undress" produces love in the formerly aloof Boyle (pp. 30-31). This transformative initiation into heterosexual desire occurs precisely through the circumstances of captivity, through the confined position of the desiring protagonist, through his outrage at the thought of a countrywoman's sexual confinement, and through invocation of the Orientalist vision of the seraglio as a site of heightened yet perverse sexuality, of both predation and promiscuity. The novel further heightens the impression of desire through its image of Mrs Villars in the seductive attire that marks her captivity, creating, as in Defoe's *Roxana*, a paradoxically exotic and reassuringly familiar sexual object by placing an Englishwoman in the "Undress" of Turkish costume, a tantalizing contrary to Western covering. But if such Orientalist details induce Boyle's desire, the plot of sexual confinement also contributes to the novel's contrast between his rationality and the depravity of his captors. After an initial moment of lover's despair, Boyle struggles to "think with Reason" and to "manage my Passion. I began to reflect the Moors were jealous of their Women even to a Degree, and did not in the least doubt but my *Irish Renegado* had learnt that Part of their Manners" (pp. 31-32). Boyle's efforts to manage his passion first take concrete form with his recollection of an Orientalist stereotype and his efforts to manipulate this imputed feature of Oriental culture. The romance plot provides Chetwood with many such opportunities to celebrate Boyle's dexterous manipulation of alien circumstances. Confined away from the seraglio, he must first find peepholes to observe his love, then contrive a system for passing notes to her, and finally engineer her escape by intoxicating her guardian eunuchs. In contrast with Hamet's rapacity, Boyle demonstrates sexual restraint in his own relations with Mrs Villars, struggling to suppress his desire even when they share a bedroom after their successful escape. Thus the novel celebrates a rational sexual mastery in its Western hero by invoking the Western vision of Oriental sexuality and imagining a villain corrupted by such sexuality as a foil for a hero who feels its allures but manages to control its effects.

As in the romance plot, the novel also more generally opposes Boyle's rational mastery of self and world to contrary tendencies in his captors, who appear vulnerable to the physical, unable to preserve a subjective insularity against its appeals, and thus unable to properly assess and control it. The novel portrays them as fond of and vulnerable to wine, despite

"hypocritical" laws proscribing it, as Boyle repeatedly inebriates Hamet's Oriental servants in order to gain their confidence and reduce their watchfulness during key moments of his escape. He also benefits from his captors' superstition, especially when the scraps of a note to Mrs Villars fall into the hands of a eunuch. Observing a general veneration for small scraps of paper, Boyle "ask'd the Reason of all this Bustle, about a Thing we Europeans put to the most servile Uses" (p. 42). When he learns that the Muslims believe that the paper will help them "get to their Prophet" on judgment day (p. 42), his contempt for this "whimsical Story" enforces a Western opposition between Oriental superstition and scientific or mercantile evaluation of the "servile Uses" appropriate to ordinary objects. Superstition apparently blinds the eunuch, preventing him from recognizing the material resources of the Western captive. Through this portrait of the captor's superstition, and of his appetites for flesh and wine, the text constructs the Oriental as a subject susceptible to the power of objects, so that he provides a sharp contrast for the Western subject's mastery over objects.

Another key contrast between the masterful captive and his susceptible captors involves management of narrative resources, a crucial concern for Richardson, Fielding, and many other eighteenth-century novelists.²⁹ Chetwood transforms the captivity narrative's interest in dissembling into an elaborate plot of masterful storytelling. From the moment that Boyle falls into the hands of the corsairs, he manipulates Hamet with flattery and lies. The false assertion that Boyle *chose* to join the corsairs in order to escape American servitude earns him the sympathy and respect of Hamet in particular and of the Oriental community in general, ultimately enabling his relative freedom of movement and the more elaborate deceptions that lead to his escape. His dissembling continues with an effort to conceal his passion for Mrs Villars behind a feigned "Detestation of all Females" (p. 32). The veil of misogyny, buttressed by "several extravagant Tales of my own Invention," helps him to fool a eunuch into sharing information about Mrs Villars and into granting Boyle a free run of Hamet's compound (pp. 33-34). Boyle cannot always manage such complicated chicanery with facility and confidence, however, and throughout the text the threat of discovery underscores the tenuous opposition between his carefully calculated exterior image and the interior truth of his passions for liberty and Mrs Villars. His heroic efforts in "Dissimulation" require enormous mental labour, as he spends a

29 See Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Desire and Truth: Functions of Plot in Eighteenth-Century English Novels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

“whole Night in thinking of a thousand Expedients to forward my Designs, till I had thought of so many that they were all confus’d like a Skein of Silk pull’d the wrong way” (p. 34). Thus dissembling provides the captive hero with an intricate and difficult interior life, especially in contrast to his dangerous yet easily understood and manipulated captors.

The apparent power of Western storytelling emerges most concretely with the final realization of Boyle’s escape plan and his resultant transformation from slavery to mastery. He escapes through an elaborate sham “project,” which occupies most of his time and energy in captivity, and which plays on Hamet’s superstition and lust for Mrs Villars, by promising him a love potion based on putatively scientific “Experiment” rather than Oriental “Witchcraft” (p. 49). To sell this project, Boyle improvises a *senex amans* tale that illustrates the power of this “wonderful Arcanum” (p. 50) and emphasizes its rarity, secrecy, and supernaturalism. His apparent magical powers impress both Hamet and his eunuchs. Blinded by passion and superstition, the renegado foolishly agrees to absent himself for the duration of Boyle’s project, granting him enough time, money, and freedom to bring it to fruition. Boyle applies this time to scouting out escape routes and applies the money to Moorish disguises and other tools of escape. As the escape plan emphasizes both the complexity of his intelligence and the gullible superstition of his captors, the internal depths of the masterful Western subject take shape against the apparent inferiority of the deceived Orientals.

Boyle’s discursive mastery of the Oriental environment and peoples enters a new, institutionally sanctioned phase after he completes his escape and becomes an Orientalist. When a French ambassador recognizes in him a “Capacity fit” for collecting “some Observations of the Customs and Manners” of Morocco (pp. 116–17), the novel suddenly metamorphoses into an Orientalist travel description, as he documents the local peoples, customs, government, and religion. In highlighting Boyle’s capacity to document the alien, Chetwood suggests an alliance of mercantile or entrepreneurial capacity, observational or scientific capacity, and diplomatic or political capacity, all based on skills of adaptation. Through this transformation of both text and character, the novel literalizes the captivity genre’s more subdued connection between Western intellectual mastery of the Orient and the physical mastery of the Orient that enables the captive’s escape. With this sudden assumption of an Orientalist framework, the text seems quite literally to restore the West’s imagined hierarchy of nations, as the former English slave achieves a scientific mastery over an Oriental environment that had formerly subjected him, but that now lies subject to his scrutiny.

A standard Orientalist methodology pervades this travel description, which divides Morocco into sections for different cities and customs, all in the service of creating a consistent opposition between Boyle's rational superiority and Oriental despotism, superstition, and lust. After a detailed list of Moroccan cities establishes a tone of scientific rigour and documentary fullness, he shifts suddenly to a language of ethnographic vituperation: "As to the nature of the Inhabitants, they are most of a tawny Complexion, of a lazy, idle Disposition, and curs'd with all the Vices of Mankind; mistrustful to the last Degree, false, jealous, and the very Picture of Ignorance" (p. 120). Boyle repeats many other Orientalist stereotypes, insisting on Moroccan cowardice, superstition, and disposition for bodily indulgence. When he asserts that the women are "very amorous" (p. 125) and that the natives follow their religion "only like Children ... because they are order'd" (p. 127), such imputed features of Oriental peoples stand in sharp opposition to the heroic religious and sexual self-possession of Boyle and Mrs Villars in their resistance to Hamet's efforts in proselytism and seduction. Thus Boyle's travel description confirms the Orientalist oppositions of his captivity narrative and generally presents Oriental behaviour as irrational, impassioned, and excessive, in contrast to what is described as the normal rational subjectivity of the Westerner. He describes several customs through specific contrasts with Western rationality, such as when he observes some Moroccans stripping naked and sitting on their clothes during a rainstorm: "If a Man were to do so in England, he would be counted a Madman, or a Fool" (p. 127). On another occasion, typically Orientalist in its citation of extreme brutality as representing the truth of the Orient, Boyle describes an innocent workman's arbitrary punishment at the hands of the Moroccan emperor, who repeatedly strikes the servant with a dart as he compliantly returns the weapon after each blow. Imagining himself in the servant's place, Boyle declares that he would have killed the emperor and accepted his own death as punishment rather than tolerate such repeated abuse. Again Chetwood builds an image of Western self-assertion by juxtaposing it with images of Oriental servility.

Given concrete intellectual form in Boyle's description of Morocco, his colonial aptitude enables worldwide travel and economic mastery in his subsequent narrative. As in *Robinson Crusoe*, the hero's early experience as a Barbary captive seems to provide an education in colonial skills, which he later adapts to other colonial lands. After his escape and sojourn in Morocco, he becomes captain of a European trading vessel, and his first lucrative transaction—a chance encounter with Hamet's vessel,

the renegado's death, and capture of his booty—further rectifies the seeming national imbalance of Boyle's captivity. Next, as the novel follows his Defoe-like career around the coast of South America, he offers a series of travel descriptions emphasizing the natural resources and military defences of various colonial ports. The observational skills and colonial imperative evident in these schematic descriptions find parallels at the level of plot in Boyle's illicit trade and privateering among the Spanish and Portuguese, and in skirmishes with native Americans that gain him huge spoils and loyal slaves. Throughout these transactions Boyle relies on skills in dissimulation and assessment of alien peoples which he had initially honed in his Barbary captivity, and he reveals generosity in treating prisoners and in sharing wealth with his multi-national subordinates. His skill in managing an enormous range of colonial peoples for an immense profit creates an image of an exemplary colonial master born in the crucible of Barbary captivity. In fictionalizing the Barbary captivity narrative, Chetwood transforms the mildly self-assertive captive into a radically aggressive and enormously successful proto-colonist, through an intensification of the genre's more subdued opposition between Western colonial skills and an Oriental culture that provides the initial provocation for these skills.



Compared with Chetwood's novel, Penelope Aubin's adaptations of the Oriental captivity plot exhibit a less pronounced colonial agenda. In place of an aggressively mercantile English hero, she focuses on continental captives, especially passive noblemen, proselytizing priests, and women, character types largely absent from English factual accounts of Barbary captivity. This shift in character types would seem to offer infertile ground for individualistic or colonial ideology, especially since they seem consistent with Aubin's position as a woman and a Catholic, doubly removed from the circles of British mercantile expansion. Nevertheless, her novels link even these character types with somewhat tempered versions of the captivity plot's individualistic and colonialist motifs. Here I will focus particularly on her female captives, characters who demonstrate the captivity plot's broad potential for developing varied images of the Western subject's mastery of self and world.

Aubin's characterization of female captives ranges from virtuous passivity to transgressive activity, but they share, along with the male captives of the factual accounts, the common features of insularity, self-assertion, and self-control, as defined through the threats of subjugation and debasement in Oriental settings. With her many female captives,

as with Chetwood's Mrs Villars, images of Oriental lust, along with a continual constraint of the female body and the concomitant threats of seduction, rape, and forced marriage, help to reinforce the Western female subject's preservation of sexual virtue, which represents, as it were, Western integrity and self-possession. Such dramas of besieged virtue, situated within the Orient, provide the primary narrative drive for Aubin's first novel, *The Strange Adventures of the Count de Vinevil* (1721), for her most popular novel, *The Noble Slaves* (1722), and for her final novel, *The Life and Adventures of the Young Count Albertus* (1728). Oriental captivity also figures prominently in *The Life and Amorous Adventures of Lucinda* (1722) and in *The Life of Charlotta Du Pont* (1723). In these works the stereotypical dangers of the Orient often force female captives to improvise a variety of self-reliant, aggressive, and even mercantile behaviours, including many of those exhibited by Boyle and the heroes of the factual accounts. As the self-preservation of Aubin's heroines involves transgression of gender roles in male disguise, a choice of active self-defence over passivity, and even participation in a limited colonial economy, the circumstances of Oriental slavery provide a paradoxical liberation from the increasingly domestic guidelines for female behaviour.

The preface to *The Noble Slaves* situates its narrative of female chastity and transgressive self-fashioning within a framework of Orientalist and nationalist oppositions. The preface offers a series of generalizations about Oriental government, economy, and sexuality, all emphasizing their departure from Western standards of political and economic individualism. In contrast to the English "nation, where the Subjects are born free," the preface describes "Turks and Moors" as given to absolute monarchy and abject slavery.³⁰ Whereas the English "Constitution will always keep us rich and free," Oriental despotism throttles the people's economic drive (p. x). The preface develops a specifically feminine role within its nationalistic and individualistic ideology by adding that Oriental despotism allows the tyrant sexual power over many female slaves, including Western women: "There the Monarch gives a loose to his Passions, and thinks it no Crime to keep as many Women for his Use, as his lustful Appetite excites him to like" (p. x). Within the preface's framework of oppositions between Oriental despotism and the free-born English subject, chastity assumes national importance as a field in which a limited female autonomy can be defined against images of Oriental predation.

30 Penelope Aubin, *The Noble Slaves: or, the Lives and Adventures of Two Lords and two Ladies...* (London: E. Bell et. al., 1722), pp. ix-x. References are to this edition.

Although Aubin's plots place sexually predatory men all over the planet, the Orientalist motifs of despotism and ferocious sexuality provide imaginative resources to which she repeatedly turns, whether she locates the captivity plot in Barbary, Turkey, or Persia. Her novels multiply episodes of besieged chastity and captive integrity through a complex, interlaced structure of interpolated tales, as a variety of captives arrive briefly on the scene to announce their personal subjugations, resistance to sexual predation, and efforts to escape. Slight variations in the basic pattern, assisted by common Orientalist stereotypes, build an image of the Orient as a world of polymorphous, uncontrollable, and predatory sexuality. To explain the aggressive desires of a Moroccan prince, Aubin declares in *The Noble Slaves* that "the Moorish Nobility, and indeed the Whole Nation, are much inclin'd to Love, very amorous and gallant" (p. 107). Elsewhere in the same novel, one male captive narrates his sexual coercion at the hands of an old female master, and another male recounts a Tunisian governor's efforts to seduce him to "a use the Mahometans often keep young Men for" (p. 139). More often female characters narrate various masculine attempts to seduce or constrain their bodies, whether by a luxurious despot, an animalistic slave, or a vicious renegado, whether through rape, seduction, or simply imprisonment within a seraglio. The most common pattern, involving a stereotypical potentate, recurs so insistently that it borders on the inevitable. As one captive husband predicts to his wife, immediately following their capture by Algerian pirates, "you will be ravished from me by some powerful Infidel, who will adore your Charms" (p. 42). Both pattern and passage imagine Oriental rulers as necessarily despotic, predatory, and particularly interested in Western women.

Aubin combines this vision of the Orient with other aspects of the captivity plot in order to celebrate heroines whose piety and chastity stand equal to the extremes of power, wealth, and depravity described by Orientalism. Her works define the heroic virtue of Western women against images of the already fallen women of the seraglio, as powerful Oriental men repeatedly abandon jealous and beautiful Oriental women for Western slaves.³¹ Often the potentate, far from simply buying the Western heroine in a simple economic transaction, sees in her a noble beauty commensurate with his power. When the predatory despot tries to seduce her with offers of freedom, extreme wealth, and even political influence,

31 Felicity Nussbaum has argued more generally that images of the "other" woman play an important role in creating the domestic heroine; see *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

his failure reinforces her heroic maintenance of chastity, which itself often staggers him, increasing his passion but also sometimes ennobling and reforming him, even forcing him to grant her freedom. When the potentate resorts to violence, the Oriental setting further reinforces the plot of besieged chastity, as the heroine's distance from her homeland helps to emphasize her lack of any recourse to law, money, or family, while explicit comments on Oriental despotism highlight her powerless subjugation. Within the seraglio, the master, like Lovelace, often enlists the aid of his sexually experienced concubines for his rape or seduction. Like Pamela or Clarissa, the female captive sometimes contemplates suicide and frequently threatens or even performs violence against herself in defence of her virtue. Aubin's works rely heavily on Orientalist oppositions to reinforce their heroines' proto-Richardsonian defence of chastity. In *The Noble Slaves* the enslaved Emilia swears, "I will die rather than live a Vassal to a vile Mahometan's unlawful lust" (p. 42). Like many similar vows in Aubin's fiction, this declaration compresses the drama of besieged chastity with the Orientalist vision of the East as a place without the protection of laws, where absolute tyranny can exercise political power over vassals and sexual power over virgins. However, the potentate's continual desire for and failure to subdue the Western heroine represent the Orient as abject and impotent, even in the supposed heights of its power, when faced with the seemingly unconquerable appeal and incorruptible resolve of Western self-possession.

Nevertheless, these dramas of chastity and fidelity, far from defining the female subject entirely in terms of resistance to sexual assaults, also grant her a limited activity and self-assertion by depicting such behaviour as demanded by the situation of Oriental captivity. Often Aubin's heroines must assert themselves because their male companions prove inadequate in dealing with Oriental potentates, who easily isolate the women from any possible assistance from their companions, sometimes even forcing the latter into degrading bondage. In *The Noble Slaves*, for example, Emilia's male companions try to prevent an Algerian potentate from separating male from female captives, but his soldiers immediately reduce the men to passivity and debilitating confinement. While Aubin generally depicts female slaves as surrounded by luxury, she often describes the bondage of Western men according to a pattern well established in the factual captivity narratives, with a wealth of particular details concerning locks and chains, humiliating drudgery, wretched food and bedding. When she does include more active Western males, they are hermits and priests such as Count Albertus, men who master the Orient quietly rather than spectacularly, secretly gaining a small

livelihood, converting natives, and collecting escaped slaves for return to Europe.



Detail of frontispiece to Michel Baudier, *Histoire Generale du serrail, et de la cour du Grand Seigneur Empereur des Turcs* (Paris, 1624). Reproduced by permission of McMaster University Library.

Because the Oriental captivity plot can render Western men abject, ineffectual, or mild, it allows Aubin to imagine situations that demand a modicum of female self-assertion. Deprived of male protection, her female captives assume some of the autonomous, improvisatory, and transgressive activities of the escaping captive. In *Charlotta Du Pont*, for example, the brief interpolated tale of Angelina highlights the resourcefulness of a female captive's "Wit, which exceeded her Sex," as she exhibits the calm resolution and clever resourcefulness of the captive hero.³² After her capture by Algerian corsairs and sale to a lustful Tunisian ruler, she shows a "heroick Spirit and consummate Virtue" as she "bravely resolv'd to die, rather than submit to a Mahometan; and

32 Penelope Aubin, *The Life of Charlotta Du Pont...* (London: A. Bettesworth, 1723), p. 146. References are to this edition.

thus determin'd, began to consider what to do to deliver her self" (p. 140). The text moves immediately from an Orientalist vow of chastity to the careful deliberation of the male captive. Angelina's deliberation emphasizes her observational skills, as she quickly discovers the keys to her prison in the hands of a "Moorish slave," and then carefully notes the advantage which her master's absence gives her. The escape plot hinges on a series of problems which she easily overcomes, first climbing out her window with some bed sheets, next breaking into a closet to secure Turkish clothes, and finally fashioning these clothes into Oriental disguises. To obtain the all-important key from the slave, Angelina plans to "stab him with a Penknife I have hid about me" (p. 145). However, this carefully contained violence, so important for Clarissa as for many other eighteenth-century heroines, does not become necessary, as Angelina takes advantage of her captors' drunkenness, a detail which the text cites as an instance of Oriental hypocrisy: "altho their Prophet does forbid it them; for few Mussulmen refuse to drink it in Private" (p. 147). In sum, this escape parallels those of the factual accounts in several ways: in the captive's careful deliberation on method, in her ability to recognize favourable circumstances and the utility of ordinary objects, and in her ability to capitalize on the stereotypical weaknesses of Orientals. By placing a triumphant female protagonist in an Oriental captivity plot, Aubin creates a transgressive heroine who can approach male adventurers in their resourcefulness, observational skills, and mastery of the alien.

Within Aubin's fictions, transgressive female mastery of the Orient extends even to colonialist motifs, although her heroines' modest and carefully contained financial successes fall somewhat short of the masterful colonialist aptitude registered in Okeley or Boyle. After Angelina escapes, she builds a nascent colony on the Tunisian coast, along with a noble Spanish couple, also escaped captives. Like many characters in Aubin's Oriental fictions, the husband pursues a Crusoe-like existence as a self-reliant castaway, adapting to the alien circumstances of the Oriental environment, building a home, complete with a fireplace, out of an abandoned mosque. He obtains a more secure refuge in a manner typical of Aubin's male escapees. Taking advantage of supposed Oriental superstition, he masquerades as a dervish and convinces a local fisher couple to give their own home to these budding Western colonists. These peasants prove "very serviceable" to the Europeans, eventually convert to Christianity, and secure their escape on a Spanish vessel (p. 162). Within this episode, quick-thinking deception and more general skills in adaptation enable the former captives to fulfil, at a microcosmic level, the

colonial agenda of converting native peoples, gaining their support, and appropriating their resources. Despite continual fear of recapture, these budding colonists also achieve some economic success. As a captive the noble husband had adapted to the labour of making straw hats and baskets, and these skills blossom into a cottage industry when he teaches the women to make such products "with great dexterity," sells them in town, and receives "enow to supply them with Bread and Meat in way of exchange" (p. 163). Thus isolation within an unknown land and threatening environment compels the noble trio to alter themselves according to its demands, as they transgress the boundaries of gender and status while drawing on the resourceful skills of the mercantile hero. Under the guidance of a Western male, the female escapees make what seem properly limited, even domestic contributions to this mini-factory of colonial mercantilism.

Another important female economic contribution results from the sale of jewels that the women had fortuitously discovered and prudently confiscated during their escape. Throughout Aubin's novels her heroines gain wealth from their Oriental masters through such accidents; several of her heroines obtain hordes of jewels from the luxurious costumes their masters had forced them to wear. Thus Aubin grants her heroines one of the common motifs associated with the adventurous hero of colonial fiction, translating colonial appropriation of resources into images of fabulous booty gained through accident rather than planning, as a chance by-product of the radical self-assertion demanded by the circumstances of subjugation under a putatively tyrannical and inferior people.

Within Aubin's fictions, subjugation within a dangerous Oriental setting can force female characters to extremes of violent self-assertion from which later fiction, with its focus on domesticity and sensibility, would tend to dissociate its heroines. In *The Noble Slaves*, the Spanish slave Maria tears out her eyes in order to thwart the lust of a Persian emperor, who, cowed by this extreme defence of her sexual virtue, grants her freedom (p. 33). Aubin's heroines more often direct their violence against their aggressors. In the same novel, when an Algerian overlord threatens to rape Emilia, she kills him before also killing a renegade to effect her escape. The novel carefully controls the effects of such violence by highlighting the heroine's mental disturbance, which appears in a "look that spoke the Terrors of her Mind, and the strange Deed her Hands had done" (p. 48). While these "Terrors" suggest a partial shift towards the ideology of female passivity and sensibility, Aubin's fictions nevertheless repeatedly depict the "strange" actions of female violence as justified resistance to the subjugation of Oriental slavery. One

of her heroines, after threatening to kill her lustful Turkish captor, escapes by setting fire to his seraglio, and thus inspires another Western woman, who had accepted concubinage, to reproach herself for her lack of such heroic resistance.³³ The contrast between the two characters creates a justification for female violence under such extreme conditions as those that seem to characterize the Orient.

Aubin's Oriental settings demand other transgressive forms of female behaviour, signalled most concretely in their dexterous manipulation of disguises. The Oriental captivity plot helps her to develop a crucial motif in heroic romance and in novels by women from Behn to Inchbald, where female manipulation of costume marks an important ideological fantasy or protest about female power within the limits imposed by domesticity and consumerism.³⁴ Within Aubin's works, almost every iteration of the captivity plot involves the female captive's adoption of native dress, sometimes because her master insists that she wear the finery of "Turkish" costume, but more often because she needs the disguise in order to escape. Like the heroes of factual accounts, her captives achieve and maintain their freedom by projecting false selves to deceive their captors, sometimes through the resourceful dissembling associated with male captives, but most often through elaborate and carefully planned costumes. Whereas Chetwood employs Turkish costume as a sign of danger for his hero's inamorata, Aubin celebrates her heroines' Roxana-like mastery of Oriental costume.

Aubin's use of disguise intensifies the captivity plot's emphasis on the dexterous self-mastery and subjective depths of the captive as defined against an image of an exotic yet inferior Orient, easily understood, resisted, imitated, and deceived. When masters force Turkish costumes on their female slaves, the novels describe such clothing with a wealth of descriptive detail and luxurious epithet, creating an air of exotic sexuality. Despite the temptation of this luxurious and provocative clothing, the women remain uncomfortable with its imposition and indifferent to its allures, so that their seemingly incorruptible essence of chaste purity resists

33 Penelope Aubin, *The Strange Adventures of the Count de Vinevil ...* (London: E. Bell et. al. 1721; New York: Garland, 1973), pp. 87–92.

34 For varying views on female disguise in eighteenth-century fiction, see Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986); Mary Anne Schofield, *Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind: Disguising Romances in Feminine Fiction, 1713–1799* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990); and Catherine Craft-Fairchild, *Masquerade and Gender: Disguise and Female Identity in Eighteenth-Century Fictions by Women* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993). Laura Brown has argued that female clothing plays an important role in the mystification of colonial ideology; see *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

redefinition within an alien culture that seems to exist at the level of surface rather than depth. An even greater sense of Western female mastery over Oriental culture results when the captives choose Turkish costumes themselves. With Angelina's escape, for example, the heroine carefully deliberates over her choice of a eunuch's costume and then switches to that of Oriental lady, finally reaching a perfect disguise through a darkened face. Through this skilful assumption and alteration of disguises, such a narrative highlights the captive's careful observation of her environment and her ability to adapt herself to suit its demands. The narrative tension surrounding disguise continues after escape, especially with the threat that any passing Oriental male will penetrate the Western fugitive's seemingly unnatural disguise, seeing through outer appearance and behaviour to the inner female subject in all her sexual vulnerability. Thus disguise helps to interpolate the depths of Western female consciousness, constructed in terms of a division between an inward essence and an outward image, so that the outward image can skilfully and temporarily play with the boundaries of race, gender, and status, while the inward essence retains its inborn, "natural" integrity. While Aubin's clever Western females easily master the details of Oriental costume and behaviour, her Oriental characters remain forever fixed in such costumes as in the putative attributes of their culture.

When the circumstances of Oriental captivity require Aubin's females to assume masculine disguise, this motif contributes to their heroism of transgressive self-fashioning and masterful adaptation, a heroism most fully realized in *Lucinda*. Although the titular heroine first dons male attire before she reaches the Orient, she retains this costume throughout her sojourn in order to protect herself against various threats associated with Eastern lands. Her assumption of masculine disguise both endangers and transforms her, placing her in situations that threaten her chastity, but also allowing her to abandon passivity for an array of cross-gendered resources. The novel carefully details her simulation of male behaviour, which reaches perfection when she easily adapts to fighting with a Barbary rover: "no one who had been a Witness of my Behavior, would have suspected me for any other than a finished Hero."³⁵ Once she enters Turkish slavery and confronts the putative sexuality of the Orient, her disguise produces a set of problems which she handles with the improvisational skills of the resourceful captive. When her master places this seeming male slave in charge of his personal apartment, including his

35 Penelope Aubin, *A collection of entertaining histories and novels...* (London: D. Midwinter et al., 1739), pp. 228–29.

dress, much dramatic tension arises from the discrepancy between an inward female essence defined by chastity and the cross-gendered sexual possibilities of her outward appearance, behaviour, and situation. Another test of her skills in impersonation arises after a chance meeting with her long-lost but still favourite suitor, now a fellow slave reduced to passive weakness and abject bondage but still strangely attracted to this masculine simulation of his lady love. A final complication involves the "fruitless Passion" of a "young Turkish Lady" for the disguised Lucinda, who feared Turkish "Jealousy" because she "knew the Women of that Country were not framed of the coldest Mould."³⁶ In each of these situations, Lucinda's precarious cross-gendered self-fashioning is threatened by some aspect of Turkish captivity, whether by the personal attendance imposed on the slave, by the close, crowded living conditions of the slaves, or by the imputed sexual aggression of Turkish peoples. To preserve both her masculine disguise and her feminine "virtue," Lucinda fools all of these potential discoverers of her identity by fabricating histories of a masculine past, and thus her impressive storytelling skills, like those of Boyle, signal a Western ability to adapt and dissemble as they allow her to maintain her chaste essence against the dangers associated with Oriental slavery. While the romance device of a male disguise helps to create a transgressive female subject and a concomitant liberation from feminine social constraints, her most extreme moments of transgressive and emancipatory self-fashioning result precisely from the extreme duress of Turkish captivity. The dangerous and alien setting of the Orient permits and even demands female assumption of a masculine heroism along with a masculine disguise. Placing a female subject within the largely masculine preserve of the Oriental captivity plot thus allows Aubin to develop a gender-bending heroine who incorporates, in a limited fashion, many of the crucial motifs associated with the heroic captive male, particularly in her rational mastery of self and alien environment as defined against the seemingly irrational excesses of the Orient.



Compared with Aubin's works, subsequent English novels diminish the transgressive self-fashioning and active self-preservation of female characters. Nevertheless, later novels follow her Orientalist texts in dramatizing besieged female virtue, resistance to despotism, and adaptation to

36 Aubin, *A collection*, pp. 244–45.

alien environments. While the plot of captivity under alien peoples remains an important subgenre of the English novel, narrative patterns such as the virtue-in-distress narrative, the Gothic, and the *Bildungsroman* adapt the plot of subjugation and alienation to increasingly domestic environments of social tyranny. As evident in the early eighteenth-century fictions of Aubin and Chetwood, the Oriental captivity plot enabled a variety of characterizations that remained important for the later English novel—the improvisational subject who masters an alien environment, the insular subject who defends her or his virtue, the divided subject who mediates internal conflicts and tensions, and the transgressive subject who crosses boundaries of nation, class, and gender. Within both “factual” and “fictional” narratives of Oriental captivity, these variable subjects emerge through the projection of autobiographical voices embodying Western reason and civilization, recounting the isolation and intolerable subjugation of slavery within an alien land, and describing efforts to return to the seat of proper subjection in a Western state. The speaking Western subject is also a knowing subject, who becomes the source of “factual” knowledge about the Orient, a detailed representation of the Orient as a place of despotism and danger, with a correlative image of the Oriental as cruel, lascivious, hypocritical, superstitious, and gullible. This “knowledge” contributes to ideologies of bourgeois individualism and colonial expansion, as the putative shortcomings of the Oriental highlight the strengths of the ideal Westerner or Briton, and as the putative dangers of the Orient justify radical self-assertion and colonial intervention.

Thus these early British fictions of captivity apply the strategies of Orientalist knowledge formation to ideologies of British identity formation. In the 1720s these fictions provided a prominent, even seminal mode of representing subjugation, alienation, and individualist triumph in fiction. Combined with the equally popular narrative pattern of shipwreck, they demonstrate that colonialism granted English writers a set of narrative patterns, focused on individualistic mastery of alien situations, that continued to animate their fictions through the eighteenth century and beyond.

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