

**CAPTIVE IN BARBARY:  
THE STEREOTYPING OF ARABS, TURKS, AND ISLAM  
IN EARLY AMERICAN SOCIETY, 1785-1850**

by

Paul Miranda

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in History with Distinction

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## **ABSTRACT**

Scholars have primarily used the enslavement of American sailors in the Barbary Coast of North Africa to do comparative slavery analyses, diplomatic history, or the study of early American identity formation. I have used the same events to analyze how early American society perceived and stereotyped the Muslim inhabitants of the Barbary States. To accomplish this goal, I have analyzed the Barbary captivity narratives that filled bookshelves in the United States from the late 1780s until the 1850s. These narratives helped to construct two stereotypically and racially distinct Arab and Turkish archetypes in the minds of early American readers. The Barbary captivity narratives also provided Americans with some of their first experiences with Islam. Unlike the development of the Arab and Turkish archetypes, the Barbary captivity narratives did not present a universal depiction of Islam. The ways in which these authors varied in their views of Islam reveals a great deal about how the role religion varied in early American society. The Barbary literature also put a great deal of emphasis on the perceived failure of the Barbary States and their belief that Turkish despotism led to that failure. This tendency highlights how early Americans saw themselves as the world's modern race and believed that they were truly constructing a new society following their independence from Great Britain.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The cover of the August 30, 2010 edition of *TIME* magazine read, “Is America Islamophobic?” While “Islamophobia” has not yet earned a place in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the idea of American hostility to a particular religion caused enough of a stir for the term to be placed on one of the more prestigious covers in American news media. The presence of Islamophobic rhetoric is often too easy to find in contemporary America. Ann Coulter of the *National Review* wrote in September 2001, “We should invade their countries, kill their leaders, and convert them to Christianity... this is war.”<sup>1</sup> Coulter’s article was written shortly after the September 11, 2001 attacks, but Michael Savage, on his widely followed radio program, *The Savage Nation*, said in May 2004 that “These people [Arabs and Muslims] need to be forcibly converted to Christianity.... It’s the only thing that can probably turn them into human beings.”<sup>2</sup> It is not just a few fringe politicians or journalists who are taking a prejudicial view towards Muslims, but significant numbers of the American population. A 2010 Gallup Center report found that forty-three percent of Americans

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<sup>1</sup> John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin, *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), XXI. Coulter was fired by the *National Review* following her article. See Media Matters, “Coulter spiked from *USA Today*: Why was she hired in the first place?” <http://mediamatters.org/research/200407270005> (accessed May 7 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Esposito and Kalin, *Islamophobia*, XXI.



admit to feeling at least “a little” prejudice towards Muslims, which was more than twice the number who held the same feelings towards Christians, Jews, and Buddhists. Nine percent of Americans were registered as feeling “a great deal” of prejudice towards Muslims, and another twenty percent admitted to feeling “some” prejudice.<sup>3</sup>

The current discourse against Islam has evolved past the seemingly blind hatred of Coulter and Savage. On March 12, 2011, blogger John Guandolo, of the widely followed website *Breitbart.com*, blogged in its “Big Peace” subsection:

How did the [Muslim] Brotherhood actually insinuate itself into the fabric of America? How is it possible that today the most prominent Islamic organizations in North America are controlled by the Brotherhood and actually seek to subordinate the individual liberties of Americans (and Canadians) to the slavery of Shariah (Islamic Law)?<sup>4</sup>

Guandolo’s rhetoric, which approaches that of a fringe conspiracy theorist, is not too far off from the comments of more mainstream writers. In the height of the 2011-2012 controversy over the legal battle to prevent the construction of a mosque in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, the state senate introduced a bill that would criminalize the following of Shariah law by Muslims. Rebecca Bynum of the Nashville *New English Review*, in regards to a bill that would make the washing of feet before prayer and countless other practices of Islam felonies, said, “I applaud Senator Ketrone for his

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, XXIV.

<sup>4</sup> John Guandolo, “The Muslim Brotherhood in America: Part III The Settlement Process,” Big Peace, entry posted on March 12, 2011. <http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Peace/2011/03/12/The-Muslim-Brotherhood-in-America---Part-III---The-Settlement-Process> (accessed 7 May 2012). The website was recently updated and the comments section on older articles seems to have been deleted. The Big Journalism section’s Twitter feed has, as of 7 May 2012, 16,239 followers, which can provide the reader with some understanding of the traffic that *breitbart* receives.

effort to protect the citizens of Tennessee *from the real and present danger presented by Shariah* and for the deep knowledge and thoughtful consideration that produced this bill” (italics added).<sup>5</sup> American Islamophobic thought has, in a way, coalesced around the idea that Shariah law and Islam in general stand to undermine the United States. Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House of Representatives and winner of the 2012 South Carolina and Georgia Republican Presidential primaries, said in a 2010 speech that “America is experiencing an Islamist cultural-political offensive designed to undermine and destroy our civilization.”<sup>6</sup>

The 1997 British Runnymede Report defined Islamophobia as “the dread, hatred and hostility towards Islam and Muslims perpetrated by a series of closed views that imply and attribute negative and derogatory stereotypes and beliefs towards Muslims.”<sup>7</sup> In a broader sense, however, one can view Islamophobia as a refusal to accept diversity within the Muslim World. There are certainly Muslims in the world that, if they could have their way, would drastically remake the world as they saw fit. Yet, those members of al-Qaeda and the more radical segments of the Islamic world represent an extremely small percentage of the hugely diverse Muslim World. In many ways the refusal to accept diversity within the Muslim world has often led to a

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<sup>5</sup> Bob Smietana, “Tennessee bill would jail Shariah followers,” *USA Today*, 23 February 2011 [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2011-02-23-tennessee-law-shariah\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2011-02-23-tennessee-law-shariah_N.htm) (accessed 7 May 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Michael Gerson. “The problem with Gingrich’s simplistic attacks on sharia.” *Washington Post*, 12 December 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-problem-with-gingrichs-simplistic-attack-on-sharia/2011/12/12/gIQAv0nZqO\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-problem-with-gingrichs-simplistic-attack-on-sharia/2011/12/12/gIQAv0nZqO_story.html) (accessed May 6, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Esposito and Kalin, *Islamophobia*, XXII.

conflation of the world's Islamic political organizations, some who espouse the use of violence and others who do not, into one movement that is in a state of war against the West and the United States.

In 2006, as the Republican Party's numbers were dropping, the Bush administration redefined the "war on terror" as the fight against "Islamic-Fascism." While the term makes little sense, the correlation between Mussolini and modern Islamic fundamentalist ideology (if a singular one even exists) is next to nonexistent: it was used, however, to depict a global enemy, slowly encircling the United States, who posed a real and legitimate threat to America's existence. In a 2006 memo Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said, "Talk about Somalia, the Philippines, etc. Make the American people realize they are surrounded in the world by violent extremists." The Filipino Abu Sayyaf group is estimated to have around 200 members, and according to historian and blogger Juan Cole, it resembles more of a criminal gang than an Islamic movement. Somalia based Al-Shabaab has been caught up in the intense tribal warfare that has racked Somalia for decades and its goals are predominantly local, yet, according to Rumsfeld, both groups were united in their fight against the United States and were poised to strike.<sup>8</sup>

The arguments used to justify the belief that Islam is a virus seeking to destroy the American way of life and the conflation of numerous Islamic groups into one movement that is at war with the West often make use of the more standard "Islamophobic" stereotypes. One does not have to search the internet very hard to find blogs discussing Islam's *inherently* barbaric treatment and subjugation of women.

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<sup>8</sup> Juan Cole, "Islamophobia and American Foreign Policy Rhetoric: The Bush Years and After," in Esposito and Kalin, *Islamophobia*, 128.

Nor would it be difficult to find views concerning the ways in which Islam inspires violence in its followers against Christians and Westerners. While it would be easy to assume that the ideas surrounding Islam as a religion and its relationship with the West, along with the stereotypes generally associated with Muslims (violence, fanaticism, subjugation of women, and irrational thought) are the products of the twenty-first century world following the events of September 11, 2001, the United States has, in reality, a much longer history of stereotyping Islam and Muslim peoples.

The man most often discussed when one begins to examine the relationship between the “Eastern world”, specifically Islamic in this case, and the “West,” is Edward Said. In his 1978 book, *Orientalism*, Said challenged the legitimacy of the field of Oriental Studies based on his assertion that orientalism was grounded in a culturally chauvinistic and Eurocentric view of the world in which the Eastern or “Oriental” world was seen as inherently inferior to the West. While *Orientalism* has been a source of controversy since its release, Said’s discussion of the links between orientalist study and colonialism have caused an endless debate; he displays, without a doubt, the Eurocentric view and cultural chauvinism that orientalist scholars possessed in the nineteenth century. From one of the first orientalist scholars, Silvestre de Sacy, down the line to François-René Chateaubriand, Edward Lane, Gérard de Nerval, Gustave Flaubert, and Ernest Renan, they all wrote of the Middle East as a barbaric place, a region unfit to govern itself, and a land inhabited by a people incapable of rational thought or action. While the slant of orientalist scholarship against the East is unquestionable, the field was predominantly made up of European scholars and it is debatable how influential their writings could have been on American society. It is worth noting that the first universities to adopt oriental studies in the United States

(Princeton, Harvard, and University of Chicago) brought European scholars to the United States to head their departments, but the ability of a few European scholars to influence American society's perceptions towards an entire ethnic group of people or religion seems limited at best.

Looking further back in history one finds an interesting, but often forgotten, relationship between the Muslim states of North Africa and the United States in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Following the United States' independence from Great Britain, American mercantile vessels were no longer afforded the protection of the world-renowned British navy, and in July of 1785, two American ships, the *Dauphin* and the *Maria*, fell prey to the centuries-old institution of piracy in the Mediterranean. The *Dauphin* and the *Maria* were taken as prizes and their crews enslaved, with the intention of selling them back to their government as captives, by the corsairs of the Regency of Algiers.<sup>9</sup> Piracy in the Mediterranean was a practice that went back centuries in which both the Christian powers of Europe and the Muslim powers of North Africa and the Levant raided each other's shipping and coastal communities to procure slaves.<sup>10</sup> While the scale of piratical activities had shrunk considerably by the time of America's independence, it was an old institution and it was one that Americans should have had some familiarity with. The seizure of Americans at sea and the enslavement of Americans that foundered on the Barbary

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<sup>9</sup> Lawrence A. Peskin, "The Lessons of Independence: How the Algerian Crisis Shaped Early American Identity," *Diplomatic History*, 28.3 (2004), 300.

<sup>10</sup> For more information on the history and scale of the institution of piracy in the Mediterranean see Gillian Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs: France and Slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

Coast of North Africa led to increasing hostilities with the Barbary Regencies.

Treaties were eventually signed with the Algiers, Tunis, and Morocco, but a short war was fought with the Regency of Tripoli from 1801 to 1805.

In total, Christine Sears estimates that between 1785 and 1797 one hundred and thirty American men were enslaved by the corsairs of Algiers. Out of the group of sailors enslaved in Algiers, ninety-nine were redeemed and returned to the United States (meaning that 76% of those who were enslaved were eventually freed).<sup>11</sup> From 1776 to 1830, however, Sears estimates that a total of seven hundred American men were held captive by the Barbary States of Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, and Morocco.<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that three hundred of those captives were the crew of the *U.S.S. Philadelphia* who were captured only after their frigate, which was blockading the harbor of Tripoli, ran aground in October of 1803.<sup>13</sup> Sixty-six of those seven hundred captives were enslaved after they had shipwrecked on the coast of northwest Africa. Of the sixty-six shipwrecked slaves, forty-seven (71%) were eventually redeemed.<sup>14</sup>

The enslavement of American sailors and the United States' increasing hostilities with the Barbary Coast Regencies represents America's first major interaction with the Muslim world. Barbary captivity became the lens through which early Americans gained their first understanding of Islam and the Muslim inhabitants

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<sup>11</sup> Christine Sears, "A Different Kind of Slavery: American Captives In Barbary, 1776-1830" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 2007), 323.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Robert J. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World 1776-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 28.

<sup>14</sup> Sears, "A Different Kind of Slavery," 323.

of the Barbary Coast. Following the enslavement of Americans by Barbary corsairs or desert wanderers who happened upon shipwrecked Americans, an entire field of literature that was focused on the Barbary Coast became quite popular in early American society. Within the Barbary canon three primary genres makes themselves known to the modern reader: urban captivity tales of captured sailors, Saharan captivity tales of shipwreck survivors, and histories and commentaries of the Barbary Coast kingdoms. It is my argument that this segment of early American literature constructed and reinforced stereotyped images of the Arab, the Moor, and the Turk. These stereotypes were well defined and nearly universal throughout the Barbary canon. Furthermore, it is my contention that the images, associations, and stereotypes created in the Barbary literature were not only known by a small, well-read segment of the population, but were broadly understood and known by early American society. The Barbary canon constructed a view of the Arab and Turk in which, both by stereotyping and racial imagination, distinct archetypes emerged for the Turk, on the one hand, and the Arab, on the other hand. These archetypes, while sharing some similar basic characteristics—barbaric and savage nature—were differentiated in the more specific aspects of their stereotypes and their placement on the racial spectrum.

At the most basic level, American audiences continually read of the barbaric, backwards, ferocious, incapable, and ignorant Arab, Moor, and Turk, and in this respect, they did not differ between each other. This form of generalized stereotyping was more prevalent in the histories of the Barbary region where the three racial groups were often, but not always, placed under the collective label of “Algerine.” But at the more detailed level, usually seen in the captivity narratives, the Turk emerged as a sexually deviant, unrestrained, sensual, inherently despotic, lazy, and naturally cruel

and violent being. The Turk's sexual deviance, in turn, made him a threat to women, especially western white women; whereas his (or her) inherent despotism was blamed for the destruction and ruin of the once-great Barbary region. The Arab, on the other hand, was generally constructed as an animalistic, primal (even possibly sub-human), thieving, greedy, and hardy being. But he was also a surprisingly charitable and humane creature at times. While the Turk was generally described as having a lighter skin color (making him appear frighteningly similar to Americans), the Arab was described as an olive or tawny-skinned figure and inhabited a place on the racial spectrum somewhere in between the American Indian (savage) and negro slave.

The Moor's place in the construction of these two archetypal characters was a little more ambiguous. The Moor was often conflated with the Arab both stereotypically and racially in the Barbary literature. The Moor could be differentiated, at times, from the Arab. A few of the Barbary writers noted that the Moor had a light-olive skin tone in comparison to the Arab's darker-olive skin. But there is considerable evidence to suggest that most of the Barbary writers could not properly distinguish between the two.

While the image that was presented of the Arabs, Moors, and Turks in the Barbary literature tended not to differ between the various works, the Barbary authors' views towards Islam varied drastically. Some of the Barbary writers had little or nothing to say of the religion. Those authors made a few positive remarks on the piety of the Muslims they saw and said little else. But a considerable portion of the Barbary authors reached numerous negative conclusions of Islam. Some took the centuries-old view of a battle of souls in which Islam was pitted against Christianity and represented the opposite of the "one true faith." Yet, others took a view that parallels with what is



often written about Islam in the twenty-first century: they claimed that Islam inspired violence and savagery in its followers and built a connection in which Islam was linked to despotism, slavery, and the subjugation of women.

### **Note on Sources**

For the purposes of this work the Barbary literary pieces are divided into the three categories previously mentioned, which, while they are not perfectly distinct from one another, serve as an effective way to organize the sources. The first chapter in this work looks specifically at the histories and commentaries of the Barbary Coast produced between 1797 and 1826. The histories and commentaries I have utilized specifically analyzed Algiers, but it seems likely that the majority of the histories would have looked at Algiers as it was often considered the most powerful of the Barbary Regencies. These pieces generally included a history of the region, in some cases going all the way back to the Phoenicians and Carthaginians, a commentary on the inhabitants and their customs, and a summary of the diplomatic relations between Algiers and the United States. While one of the works employed here was written by the American Consul General in Algiers, William Shaler, the writers of these pieces did not necessarily spend time in Barbary, and in the case of the other two works used here, they did not. In the urban captivity tales the protagonist was generally captured at sea by a Barbary corsair and held as a slave in Algiers, Tripoli, or Tunis. In this genre the protagonist was usually, but not always, American. In works that did not stage an American protagonist, a European from a nation that Americans could readily identify with (Great Britain, for example) was often used instead. This was the case in many of the American-written female captivity tales. In the Saharan captivity narratives, the protagonist was shipwrecked off the coast of northwest Africa and was

almost immediately taken and held as a slave. The captivity tales were occasionally written by actual captives, who spent time in Barbary. Others, however, were fictional tales that posed as factual narratives. And yet another subset of the captivity tales were fictional narratives that were upfront with their audiences about their lack of veracity. Yet, all of these works floated somewhere in between fact and fiction, an idea that will be touched upon later as those works are directly introduced.

As the reader will shortly see, there was a great deal of plagiarism in the Barbary literary field. Matthew Carey, one of the Barbary commentators analyzed in this work, lifted entire paragraphs from one of his predecessors, James Wilson Stevens. One of the most popular urban captivity narratives, *A History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin Who was Six Years a Slave in Algiers*, was a plagiarized account of an earlier urban captivity narrative. The Saharan captivity narrative of Eliza Bradley was almost assuredly a plagiarized version of James Riley's account. The fact that Carey's plagiarism of Stevens was only one of many instances of plagiarism within the Barbary canon seems to indicate that the stereotypical constructions found in any one particular Barbary work, whether it was a captivity tale or commentary, were likely not just limited to that particular work, but were present, in varying degrees, in any number of Barbary literary pieces.

In his work on eighteenth and nineteenth century Orientalist scholars, Edward Said, reached a very similar conclusion. Orientalism, in Said's view, "resorted mainly to citations of predecessor scholars in the field for its nutriment. Even when new materials came his way, the Orientalist judged them by borrowing from predecessors their perspectives, ideologies, and guiding theses."<sup>15</sup> If Orientalists "after Sacy and

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<sup>15</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 177.

Lane rewrote Sacy and Lane” and “after Chateaubriand, pilgrims rewrote him” then it appears even more likely that after James Wilson Stevens and Matthew Carey, writers such as William Shaler rewrote them.<sup>16</sup>

The urban and Saharan captivity narratives and the Barbary histories I have chosen to analyze have been utilized by scholars previously, albeit sparingly, but the spotlight has never been drawn directly on the images and stereotypes that were located in these works. Robert C. Davis’ book, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800* and Christine Sears’ previously discussed PhD work used these sources to compare North Africa’s institution of white slavery against the Americas’ institution of Africa slavery. Lawrence A. Peskin and Robert Allison utilized these sources and the Barbary captivity theme in relation to the formation of early American identity. In Lawrence Peskin’s view the Algerian enslavement of American sailors influenced how “Americans came to understand what it meant to be an independent nation.”<sup>17</sup> Scholars have also analyzed how the Barbary captivity narratives influenced early American perceptions of slavery. Gerald R. McMurtry investigated how James Riley’s narrative altered Abraham Lincoln’s view of the institution of slavery in America.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 177.

<sup>17</sup> Peskin, “The Lessons of Independence,” 298.

<sup>18</sup> Gerald R. McMurtry, “The Influence of Riley’s *Narrative* upon Abraham Lincoln,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 30 (June 1934): 133-38.

By asking what these works taught early Americans about Arabs, Moors, Turks, and Islam, rather than focusing on a slavery comparison or diplomatic and military history, I seek to look at the Barbary literature in a new light and offer a new perspective. In his 2007 article in *American Literature*, Jacob Rama Berman noted that “What has yet to be sufficiently considered, however, is the formation of American antebellum discourse on the Arabs, one that distinguished the image of the Arab from the image of the Turk and from the conglomerate image of the Islamic oriental.”<sup>19</sup> This is the question that I seek to answer. Paul Baepler, in the introduction to his anthology of Barbary captivity tales, remarked that the Barbary captivity narrative “produced some of the first and longest lasting images of Africa for Americans.”<sup>20</sup> It is my belief that this view is too simplistic. Not only were the inhabitants of Barbary distinct from the sub-Saharan Africans that came to the Americas as slaves in the minds of early Americans, but the Arab and Turk were distinctly and separately imagined by early American society with each group having its own unique set of stereotypes and place on the racial spectrum. In discussing the stereotyping of the Arab, Moor, Turk, and Islam in early American society, I also hope to reveal a great deal about the society that produced these stereotypical constructions.

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<sup>19</sup> Jacob Rama Berman, “The Barbarous Voice of Democracy: American Captivity in Barbary and the Multicultural Specter,” *American Literature*, 79.1 (2007), 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Baepler, *White Slaves African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 55.

## Chapter 2

### HISTORIES AND COMMENTARIES

The Turks are guilty of the most unnatural crimes, which are here regarded with perfect indifference.

-James Wilson Stevens, *An Historical and Geographical Account of Algiers* (Philadelphia: Hoagan & M'Elroy, 1797), 215.

In the United States at the turn of the eighteenth century a number of authors were producing works that, in some form or another, retold the history of the Barbary Coast of North Africa, described and characterized the inhabitants and their customs, and embodied what Paul Baepler has termed the “Barbary topos.”<sup>21</sup> Because of the similarity of their works, I have placed the writings of James Wilson Stevens, Matthew Carey, and William Shaler under the collective label of “histories and commentaries.” It should be noted by the reader, however, that this distinction is entirely my own. The authors of these works were not a defined group, nor were these publications necessarily a pronounced genre in their own time period. Yet, these authors all built and reinforced a similar understanding of the Barbary Coast and the Regency of Algiers in which they emphasized its former glory, stereotyped the inhabitants as a whole as barbarous and savage, and built racially specific stereotypes of the Regency’s ethnic groups. The writers of the Barbary commentaries considered here, though it was a trend that nearly all Barbary authors followed, began their

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<sup>21</sup> Paul Michel Baepler, “The Barbary Captivity Narrative in Early America,” *Early American Literature*, 39.2 (2004), 220.

histories by providing an explanation for why they wrote their accounts while simultaneously assuring the audience of their works' authenticity.

In the preface to his 1797 book, *An Historical and Geographical Account of Algiers*, James Wilson Stevens claimed that "In rendering an account of this famous regency...the author has availed himself of the most unexceptionable documents that could be procured, and perspicuity instead of elegance, and the complete development of **TRUTH** have been his primary objects, in the compilation of the work."<sup>22</sup> These sorts of declarations were quite common to many of the Barbary writers, and, more specifically, the assurances of veracity lent more credence to the stereotypical constructions that were built and reinforced by the Barbary writers. The characterizations Stevens made of the Regency or the "Algerines" were not unimportant details in a larger work: they were the primary purpose of his writing and certainly would not have been overlooked by his contemporary audience.<sup>23</sup>

Of the three Barbary commentators considered here, William Shaler was the only who had actually been to Algiers, or for that matter any of the Barbary Coast cities. In Shaler's 1826 book, *Sketches of Algiers*, he prefaced his work by explaining that he was a "secluded man, unused to literary labours." But since there was an "absence of any work giving a correct view of the real power and political importance of the piratical state of Algiers" he had to undertake his work because "few other

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<sup>22</sup> Stevens, *An Historical Account*, v-vi. Emphasis in original.

<sup>23</sup> The commentators from the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century used the word Algerine as the term Algerian had not come into existence yet. In keeping consistent with the sources, 'Algerine' will be employed for the remainder of this work.

people have had equal opportunity for becoming acquainted with, in authentic shape, the facts of which they treat.”<sup>24</sup> The last work considered in this chapter is Matthew Carey’s *A Short History of Algiers, With A Concise View of the Origin of the Rupture Between Algiers and the United States* (1805). Carey’s work did not contain a preface explaining the reasons behind his work, but his title seems to explain it all. The United States had only formalized its treaty of “Peace and Friendship” with Algiers in 1797. The events which led to the seizure of American mercantile ships and the signing of a treaty were still recent occurrences and likely to have been of interest to the contemporary American reader.

### **Despotism and Decline**

In reading Stevens’ *An Historical Account*, Carey’s *Short History*, and Shaler’s *Sketches* one quickly gets the sense that Barbary was once a place of greatness, but now it lay in ruin. In commenting on the cities of the kingdom of Algiers, Carey writes, “Bona was formerly a magnificent city. Its grandeur is now only to be traced in the ruins of a monastery”; “Bugia was formerly the capital of a kingdom of the same name...It is little better than a heap of ruins; a description which applies almost to every town in that part of the world”; “Stessa is situated in a fertile valley...it exhibits only the melancholy ruins of its former greatness.”<sup>25</sup> This type of rhetoric is quite common throughout all the histories of Barbary, implying that the Barbary

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<sup>24</sup> William Shaler, *Sketches of Algiers, Political, Historical, and Civil* (Boston: Cummings, Hillard, and Company, 1826), preface.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew Carey, *A Short History of Algiers* (New York: Vermilye for Dyckinck, 1805), 5-6, 9, and 9. Bona eventually became known as Bône and is now commonly rendered as Annaba, Bugia as Bougie, and it is unclear what name “Stessa” now takes.

commentaries had a great deal of influence on each other or that the later authors plagiarized their predecessors. Carey's predecessor, Stevens, discussed the "Pride of the Phoenician, Greek, and Romans' works, which are replete with the most curious remains of antiquity, but they lie scattered among ignorant and barbarous inhabitants."<sup>26</sup> Stevens continually emphasized the ancient wonder of Barbary, writing that "Many ruins bear evidence of their ancient grandeur and populousness", yet according to Stevens, "The country is so overrun with barbarism, that their very sites are not known even by their ruins."<sup>27</sup> Early American readers were continually painted an image in these works of the barbarous inhabitants of Algiers standing among the ruins of former glory, a glory entirely unknown to them, a glory the Algerines could not recreate.

Shaler, while reflecting on the former wonder of the region, claimed that these places of ancient glory did not fall into decay by chance: he directly linked Turkish governance (despotism) to their downfall. In discussing the Algerine city of Tlemsen, he writes, "[Tlemsen] was once the capital of a kingdom of the same name, and a place of much importance...[yet] since the establishment of Turkish domination in this country, Tlemsen, notwithstanding the advantage of its position, has fallen into entire decay."<sup>28</sup> Shaler makes the same claim about a different place, stating that "During the possession of the former [Mustigianim] by the Spaniards, Mustigianim was a city of much importance, but since its restoration to the Regency, it has fallen into entire

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<sup>26</sup> Stevens, *An Historical Account*, 135.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Shaler, *Sketches*, 9. Tlemsen is now commonly rendered as Tlemcen.



decay.”<sup>29</sup> The liability of Turkish rule was continually impressed on Shaler’s American audience and its effects were so clear to him that he could claim that “The position of this city [Constantine] is certainly one of the most happy that can be imagined, and under a reasonable government, would entitle it to every sort of prosperity.”<sup>30</sup> While Shaler was a Consul General in Algiers, he seemingly could not have had the depth of knowledge required to confidently state that Turkish domination directly led to the collapse and rot of Tlemsen, Constantine, and Mustiganim (one wonders just how ‘successful’ these cities were before Turkish rule.). Shaler’s readers, however, were continually left with the understanding that the rule of the Turks led to the downfall of numerous cities, and that many of these cities were perfectly capable of being prosperous if it were not for the inherent failures of Turkish domination.

For Shaler’s and Stevens’ readers, however, the Turks were not only despotic, but their despotism and tyranny were unmatched in the history of the world. With his claim that only he had the knowledge to write an accurate account of Algiers, Shaler told his American readers, “A dey of Algiers, while alive is the most despotic and implicitly obeyed monarch on earth.” Shaler continued, “The situation of these governors [beys of the provinces of the kingdom of Algiers] is necessarily precarious, and the tyranny and oppression which they exercise within their respective jurisdictions, to procure the means of keeping their places are probably without a parallel in the history of any other country.”<sup>31</sup> Stevens, too, reached a similar

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Mustigianim is now commonly rendered as Mostaganem.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>31</sup> Shaler, *Sketches*, 18 and 19.

conclusion, and while Shaler did not obviously plagiarize Stevens in this case, the similarity of their statements reinforces the idea that a commonality of thought existed among the Barbary writers. “Though Algiers has some appearance of a military republic,” according to Stevens, “it is in fact the most horrible of all monarchies in the world.”<sup>32</sup> The dey, Stevens says, is “perhaps the most despotic prince in the world.”<sup>33</sup> The deys of Algiers may very well have been despotic and ineffective leaders, though it was not necessarily clear from Shaler’s and Stevens’ writings that they were; yet, both authors’ readers were left with the impression that the despotism of the Turks of Algiers was unmatched by any seen before anywhere in the world and that that despotism continually led to the failure of the formerly great cities of Barbary.

The histories did not just single out the Turks as the reason behind the rot of Barbary. Shaler and Carey, specifically, often discussed the inherent character flaws within *all* the native peoples. In his remarks on the rivers of Algiers, Carey told his readers that “None of them is made use of in navigation. It is however likely that they might be made use of for this purpose, were the inhabitants of a more *intelligent and industrious character*, for some of them are of a tolerable depth. Such is the *gross ignorance* of the natives in whatever concerns domestic improvement.”<sup>34</sup> Shaler, too, remarked on the flawed character of the natives, stating that “All the fruits of the temperate climates are produced here in abundance, but except figs, pomegranates, and grapes, they are of inferior quality; though, from the peculiar physical character of

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<sup>32</sup> Stevens, *An Historical Account*, 147.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 149.

<sup>34</sup> Carey, *Short History*, 4, Emphasis added.

this country, which abounds in plains of various elevations, it must surpass most others in variety and excellence of its vegetable products, if it were inhabited by a *civilized and industrious people*.”<sup>35</sup> Not only were the natives incapable of bringing prosperity to their domains, but Carey also seems to suggest that the natives were opposed to the more refined elements of civilized societies, remarking that “In this part of the world, elegant architecture has been utterly forgotten or despised.”<sup>36</sup>

These Barbary commentaries not only offer a picture of the ways in which the Barbary Coast and its inhabitants were stereotyped for early American audiences, but they reveal a great deal about the authors themselves and their view of the United States in the days of the early Republic. The writers’ extensive discussion of Turkish despotism begins to make more sense when one considers the fact that both Federalists and anti-Federalists employed images of the Turk during the debates over the Constitution in 1787. The Federalists emphasized the anarchy of the Ottoman Empire in their arguments for a strong central state; whereas anti-Federalists pointed to the despotism and tyranny of the Turks, and the subsequent failure of their states, as a warning against a centralized government.<sup>37</sup> Stevens’, Shaler’s, and Carey’s discussions of Turkish despotism and the rot of Barbary came between ten and twenty-nine years after the Constitutional debates, but as any historian of American history would note, the debate over the power of the central government and states’ rights was, and still is, an ongoing discussion in American politics. In this sense, one can see

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<sup>35</sup> Shaler, *Sketches*, 4, Emphasis added.

<sup>36</sup> Shaler, *Sketches*, 9. Carey, *Short History*, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Allison, *The Crescent Obscured*, 35.

Carey's, Shaler's, and Stevens' discussions of Turkish despotism and ruin as a warning against excessive centralized power in the early Republic. In Robert Allison's argument, the generation of Americans who won the revolution were setting out to create a new society and government that would benefit not only themselves, but their future generations. They viewed the demise of the formerly great regions of Egypt, Syria, Turkey and North Africa, which had "stopped growing" and allowed their "once fertile lands" to turn to "desert wastes," alongside the anarchy "displayed by events in France," as potent political lessons which proved the necessity of checking the power of the federal government.<sup>38</sup> Stevens, Carey, and Shaler were simply following in a tradition of thinkers and writers who emphasized the despotism and subsequent failure of the Barbary Coast as a warning against an excessively centralized United States government.

### **Diversity and Racial Theory**

While the preceding passages stereotyped the Algerines as a whole and the Turks specifically, it is important to pause for a moment and reflect upon who the Barbary commentators claimed inhabited the kingdom of Algiers. Carey acknowledged the presence of Moors, Arabians, Levantines, Turks, Jews, Christian slaves, and Christian renegades, but he noted that it was the Arabs and the Moors who were the most numerous.<sup>39</sup> Algiers was populated by Moors, "Morescos," Jews, "Janisaries," "a great number of Turks," and Arabs, according to Stevens. But the Arabs and the Moors were also considered to be the most numerous inhabitants in his

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 45-46.

<sup>39</sup> Carey, *Short History*, 19-20.

account.<sup>40</sup> In describing the diversity of Algiers, Carey wrote, “But it may be readily supposed, that amidst such a variety of *racés*, immense numbers cannot be said to belong to any particular tribe or nation whatever.”<sup>41</sup> Stevens, eight years earlier, wrote the exact same line of text in his work.<sup>42</sup> Carey’s plagiarism of Stevens is a topic that will be addressed later. For now, attention must be drawn to eighteenth and nineteenth century conceptions of race in America to better understand how early Americans may have perceived the Arab, Moor, and Turk to be distinct from each other (and certainly distinct from their white Western selves).

Racial theory in early American society is anything but a straightforward topic. At the turn of the eighteenth century, as many of the books that are considered in this work were written and published, new theories explaining and accounting for the perceived differences between humans were being argued and debated. There is no definitive way to know which position, if any, American society as a majority favored. Instead the best option available is to review the varying ideas that were circulating at the time to better understand how early Americans may have perceived what would be called today “ethnic differences.” Perhaps the best place to start in analyzing American racial theory is to explain what it certainly was *not*, even in 1826 as Shaler’s *Sketches* was first published. It may be expected by the modern reader that biological racism played a role in the “racial” imagination of early American society. But the ideas of biological racism based on the “sciences of the races” only came into use in

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<sup>40</sup> Stevens, *An Historical Account*, 138-139.

<sup>41</sup> Carey, *Short History*, 20. Emphasis added.

<sup>42</sup> Stevens, *An Historical Account*, 141.

British intellectual circles in the late 1830s and became popular in the United States in the 1840s.<sup>43</sup> By the 1840s skull shape and size were used to delineate specific species or, at the very least, “very long-term racial entities.”<sup>44</sup> Samuel George Morton’s works *Crania Americana* (1839) and *Crania Aegyptiaca* (1844) were the foundational texts of the American branch of the scientific movement that argued that “race was a fixed [biological] entity and racial inferiority a fact.”<sup>45</sup>

If racial understanding did not connote any biological meaning in turn of the eighteenth century America, as one may have expected it to, then the question begs: what did race mean to the Americans who were reading Stevens’, Carey’s, and Shaler’s books? The word “race” has a long history of usage throughout Western discourse. Noble houses had been referred to as “races” and occasionally that title was expanded to apply to the people who were ruled by that family. The *Oxford English Dictionary* dates the use of “race” in this broad sense as early as 1600. In the age of exploration, understandings of race became, according to Bruce Dain, “Intertwined with uses of the term to refer to varieties of shape, size, and color among different kinds of dogs, horses, cattle, and sheep. New ‘breeds’ of men had been discovered by European explorers and conquerors...Hence ‘race’ connoted roughly geographical groups of people marked by supposedly common physical characteristics.”<sup>46</sup> Yet,

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<sup>43</sup> Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 113-14.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 197.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 198.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

throughout the eighteenth century, “race” had a varied and undefined meaning in literary and public discourse.

In his influential work *System Naturae* (1758), Carl Linnaeus attempted to classify and categorize all of God’s creations. He categorized human beings into five groups: *ferus*, *americanus*, *europaeus*, *asiaticus*, and *afer*. These categories, however, were arbitrary and not fixed distinctions. Species and human categories could be altered, in Linnaeus’ view, by the environment and hybridization.<sup>47</sup> In his *Histoire Naturelle*, released in forty-four volumes between 1749 and 1804, George-Louis Leclerc Buffon added another influential strain of thought for American racial theory. Buffon argued that since all the known varieties of man could reproduce with one another they were all unquestionably one species. But he claimed that specific environmental circumstances, such as the foul air, sweltering heat, and overgrown fecundity of the African tropics, prevented certain humans from reaching their potential and thus differing varieties of humans came into being.

As the eighteenth century came to a close, American authors began to publish works detailing their own beliefs on the questions swirling around race, species, and the effect of the environment on man. The debate on racial theory in early America centered on two predominant strains of thought—monogenism and polygenism. Samuel Stanhope Smith and other monogenists believed that humankind derived from one common source. Any observable differences between the varieties of humans that existed in the world were the result of the specific environments in which those varieties lived. This was the view that was generally taken by religiously orthodox

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 13.

Christians because they saw all the forms of “man” as one creation under God. On the opposite end of the spectrum were the arguments of polygenists, such as Charles Caldwell, who believed that the different varieties of man found in the world came from separate sources and were separate species. In this understanding, certain humans were naturally inferior to others on the “Great Chain of Beings.”

In defense of his monogenist position, Stanhope Smith argued that blackness resulted from living in the tropics or desert where the heat forced the body into a state of extreme relaxation as a means to survive. This state of relaxation led to an increase in fluid discharge and the accumulation of bile in the middle layer of the skin.<sup>48</sup> It was not only the heat that led to increased bile production, but “the vapours of stagnant waters with which uncultivated regions abound” and the “great fatigues and hardships; poverty and nastiness” of the inhabitants of the tropics and desert.<sup>49</sup> In the understanding of Stanhope Smith and other monogenists, “Whatever climate a people in ancient times first encountered after wandering off from Arafat would produce physical effects that would become so deeply incorporated into [their] system that [it] would become permanent ‘ground.’<sup>50</sup> Despite the role of environmental determinism in Stanhope Smith’s view of human diversity, blackness still connoted moral and mental inferiority and dark skin was still a sign of savagery and degradation.<sup>51</sup> Yet,

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>49</sup> Samuel Stanhope Smith, *the Lectures, Corrected and Improved, Which Have Been Delivered for a Series of Years, in the College of New Jersey; on the Subjects of Moral and Political Philosophy* (Trenton: Daniel Fenton, 1812), vol. 1, 16, quoted in Dain, *Monster of the Mind*, 46.

<sup>50</sup> Dain, *Monster of the Mind*, 47.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 46.



Smith believed that the inferiorities of non-whites could be erased if they were liberated and allowed to reside in a free republic and temperate climate.<sup>52</sup> Despite Smith's monogenist view, a great degree of separation was fixed between civilized white Westerners and darker skinned peoples. There may have been room for improvement in Smith's racial view, but until they actually improved themselves, darker skinned peoples were, without a doubt, distinct and separate from the white Western world.

Opposing Stanhope Smith's arguments were the polygenist writers whose works and ideas were contemporaneously prevalent in American racial discourse.<sup>53</sup> Polygenists, such as Charles Caldwell, used anatomical evidence to place differing species of humans into a "hierarchical chain of beings."<sup>54</sup> In Caldwell's writings, black skin highlighted the "categorically significant mental inferiority and anatomical difference" of blacks which, in turn, proved polygenism.<sup>55</sup> Blacks were, in Caldwell's conception, so different from white Westerners that they had to have originated from a different source. Caldwell did not specifically discuss the Arabs, Moors, or Turks, but it appears that any subscriber to his line of thought would have most probably have taken them to be, at the very least, distinct "long term racial entities" and, at the very worst, separate species from white Americans and each other.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>53</sup> Smith's 1810 *Essay* was specifically written in response to the writings of the three contemporary polygenists.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 73.

Floating between the two poles of monogenism and polygenism was Thomas Jefferson, who took a quasi-polygenist position that, depending on his context, leaned toward either end of the spectrum. In his 1781 work, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson wrote, “I advance it as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstance, are inferior to whites, both in body and mind. It is not against experience to suppose, that different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species, may possess different qualifications.”<sup>56</sup> In his first statement, Jefferson claimed that blacks had become a “distinct race.” He avoided the term “variety” because it would have implied superficial “environmentally produced differences” of the type that Stanhope Smith later argued for. Yet, he did not claim they were a “distinct species” because that would have connoted a “permanent, God-given distinction.”<sup>57</sup> Jefferson continued, “Will not a lover of natural history then, one who views the gradation in all the races of animals with the eye of philosophy, excuse an effort to keep those in the department of man as distinct as nature has formed them?”<sup>58</sup> Jefferson, as Dain points out, implied that the Great Chain of Being was a settled fact. Yet, he continued to use the word “race” rather than “species,” which was most the word most often associated with the Great Chain of Being. Jefferson was, according to Dain, “playing games with his reader, and perhaps with himself.”<sup>59</sup> The ambiguity of Jefferson’s writing, specifically the meaning of

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<sup>56</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 143 quoted in Dain, *Monster of the Mind*, 30.

<sup>57</sup> Dain, *Monster of the Mind*, 30.

<sup>58</sup> Jefferson, *Notes*, 143, quoted in Dain, *Monster of the Mind*, 31.

<sup>59</sup> Dain, *Monster of the Mind*, 31.

race, highlights the difficulty in trying to assess how American society may have perceived and understood the racial differences—by which I mean skin color, appearance, and characteristics—of the Arabs, Moors, and Turks that were noted in the Barbary literature.

In Stevens' and Carey's reference to the "variety of races" that inhabited Algiers, they used similarly ambiguous terminology to Jefferson.<sup>60</sup> The Arabs, Moors, and Turks were not the same as each other (and were certainly not the same as white Americans). They may not have been heavenly ordained, permanently separated species, but their differences were not merely the result of superficial environmental effects either. At best, in Smith's conceptions, the Arab, the Turk, and the Moor would have still been entirely separate varieties from each other and from Westerners. While there was room for them to civilize and improve themselves, they would remain separate and distinct varieties of humankind until they left the environments and societies that produced their darker skin and stereotypical characteristics.

### **Racial Stereotypes, Confused Ethnicities**

The imaginative separation between the archetypal Arab and archetypal Turk certainly relied on contemporary racial concepts, but at the very basic level it required a different set of stereotypes for each group. The Barbary commentators contributed to this stereotypical separation, albeit in a more limited fashion than the captivity writers, with the construction and reinforcement of the previously discussed

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<sup>60</sup> Carey, *Short History*, 20; Stevens, *An Historical Account*, 141.

historically unmatched despotism of the Turks and the thievish and criminal nature of the Arab and Moor.

In commenting on the Arabs of the interior, Stevens wrote, “The Arabs are stout, warlike, and skilled horsemen...but they are so addicted to robbing that one cannot safely travel through the country at a distance from the towns without a guard.”<sup>61</sup> In a similar fashion, Carey wrote that “Algiers is at the distance of some hundreds of leagues from Arabia; but as this part of Africa was formerly conquered by that nation, under the banners of Mahomet, the name is still applied to a race of tawny independent barbarians, who wander about the country in gangs and unite the double profession of a shepherd and a robber.”<sup>62</sup> In a later comment on the same subject, Carey noted that “The Moors or the Arabs, for the two names appear to be synonymous, are good horsemen, but great thieves.”<sup>63</sup> The labels “Moor” and “Arab” appear to have been interchangeable to Carey and his work may have pushed his audience to reach the same conclusion. Or, at the very least, it may have confused them as to who exactly was an Arab or a Moor. As importantly, one sees the construction of the thieving Arab stereotype. Stevens went even further in this type-casting, suggesting that thievery was part of who the Arabs were as they were not only thieves, but they were “addicted to robbing.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Stevens, *An Historical Account*, 141.

<sup>62</sup> Carey, *Short History*, 5.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

<sup>64</sup> Stevens, *An Historical Account*, 141.

The Turks were not only despotic in comparison to the Arabs and Moors, but they were also stereotyped as lazy and indolent. In commenting on the inhabitants of the metropolis of Algiers, Stevens wrote, “Both the men and women spend a great part of their time in indolence, the men in drinking coffee and smoking, and the women in dressing, bathing, conversing on their sophas, visiting the tombs of their relations, and walking in their gardens.”<sup>65</sup> Stevens did not explicitly use the word ‘Turk’ in relation to the sauntering women and indolent smoking men, but he noted later that on the corsairs the “Turks spend their time in smoking and indolence.”<sup>66</sup> It seems likely that in the first passage Stevens’ reference was to the Turks. The Turks’ laziness was, in Stevens’ construction, connected to, and intertwined with, their tyrannical nature. He noted that the citizens of Algiers were “subjected to the most absolute despotism, and most cruelly oppressed by a handful of indolent Turks.”<sup>67</sup> “The despotism of the Turkish soldiers” over the Arabs, Moors, and Christian slaves allowed them to spend their time idly and wastefully. In Carey’s *Short History* the same passage on the indolent Algerines (possibly Turks) appeared verbatim.<sup>68</sup>

Stevens’ work went a step further than either of its contemporaries in constructing specific Turkish stereotypes. Stevens painted an image of Algiers in which the Turks were lustful, sensual, and sexually depraved—characteristics that were, as we will see, much more common to the urban captivity literature. The Turks

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 143.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 157.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 142.

<sup>68</sup> Carey, *Short History*, 28.

“spend whole days at the coffee houses in smoking and sipping coffee: and as they devote no part of their time to reading or the improvement of the mind. They appear entirely divested of all reflection,” and become, according to Stevens, “the mere slaves of their sensual appetites.”<sup>69</sup> If “sensual appetites” were not clear enough, Stevens elaborated, noting that the Turks’ “whole [lives are] an uninterrupted series of intrigue, debauchery and intoxication.”<sup>70</sup> “Sodomy” was “so extremely fashionable among them” that they were “little disposed to keep this a secret.”<sup>71</sup> The Turks, evidently, “experience the greatest mortification at Ramadan because they are abridged of all the pleasures their sensual natures are capable of enjoying.”<sup>72</sup>

Yet, for all their discussion of historically unmatched Turkish despotism, Arab and Moorish thievery, and, in Stevens’ case, Turkish depravity, the Barbary commentaries never seemed to posit or provide a reason for why the Arabs, Turks, and Moors were like this. If one considers the racial theory of the time, it is likely that these characteristics could have been seen as the result of the differing but harsh environments and societies that all three groups had lived in for centuries; it could have been something innate within them— permanent God-given traits; or, more likely, it was a mix of both. Whatever the exact mix was between environmentally produced traits and God-given ones, it seems their being Muslim had little to do with these constructions.

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<sup>69</sup> Stevens, *An Historical Account*, 212.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 214.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 216.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 227.

## Islam

Despite their similar conclusions regarding the Algerine Arabs, Moors, and Turks, Stevens, Carey, and Shaler all took a relatively different view of Islam and its role in the inherent flaws of the Algerines. Carey had little to say of Islam itself or religion in general. While he had no problem writing that the natives were of a barbarous and ignorant character, he took little evident issue with Islam as it barely figures into his work. Stevens had a much more negative but traditional view of Islam. In his preface Stevens wrote, “such is the virulence of Mahometan antipathy to everything that bears the name of Christian, that their contiguity to Europe has perhaps tended to render them even more ferocious.”<sup>73</sup> Stevens’ view does share some parallels with the modern belief that Islam and Muslims have a natural tendency to hate and commit violence towards Christians and Jews, but this is in reality a line of thought that has existed for centuries. Stevens did mention that the Mahometans never “game for money, nor even trifles, and what cannot be said of Christians, they never profane the name of the Deity.”<sup>74</sup> In Stevens’ construction, Islam may have made the Arabs, Turks, and Moors more hostile, and perhaps violent, towards Christians, but it does seem to have been responsible for their more specific flaws. For early Americans who knew little of Islam, the statement about Islam’s natural antipathy to Christianity would have been a horrifying discovery; for others it was probably already known.

Shaler took a much different view of Islam than either of his predecessors; he believed, “there does not appear to be anything in Mohammedon faith more contrary to civilization and social order than in any other religion when unconnected to the

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, V.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 142.

strong arm of power.”<sup>75</sup> Shaler suggested to his readers that Islam was not responsible for the uncivilized tendencies seen in the Algerines because Islam was no more incompatible with civilization than any other religion. But he seems to suggest that when Islam is connected to the ruling government (as it was in the Barbary Regencies) that it leads to an uncivilized, barbarous, and perhaps, despotic society. The Indian Muslims of Calcutta, by contrast were, according to Shaler, “quiet ordinary citizens,” capable of living under British governance, and were not liable to the same inherent flaws as the inhabitants of Algiers because their government was not connected to Islam. In this regard, Shaler taught his American readers that an Islamic government was not only uncivilized and barbarous in and of itself, but that it inspired those very same tendencies in its citizens.

#### Women in Algerine Society

The modern reader may have expected that the Barbary commentators would have discussed the role of women in Algerine society in relation to their discussion of the barbarism of the Algerines, Turkish despotism, or Islam. While this theme did emerge to some extent in the commentaries, the three authors analyzed here all took what may be surprisingly unconcerned views on the role of women in nineteenth century Algerine society. While the Turkish harem would have been a perfect opportunity to discuss women, it was never mentioned in Carey’s narrative. When Carey did discuss the roles of women it was done matter-of-factly and without characterization. Carey noted that Arab women, “subsequent to marriage [are] obliged to wear a veil” and for a month after marriage, Arab women, “never stir from the

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<sup>75</sup> Shaler, *Sketches*, 175.



hut.”<sup>76</sup> Even the topic of polygamy did not seem to bother him. The “Algerines by their law may have four wives, but they usually content themselves with two or three at most.”<sup>77</sup> Instead of characterizing their practice of polygamy as uncivilized or not, Carey proceeded to describe the manner in which a marriage was agreed upon in Algerine society and went on to discuss the way the Turkish militia elected the dey. Stevens noted that the Turks regarded their “women as an inferior order in creation, and consequently [they are] not entitled to similar distinction.”<sup>78</sup> Yet, Stevens did not seem to be bothered by such a belief. He showed no qualms about characterizing any of the other behaviors of the Turks, Arabs, or Algerines as a whole as barbarous, savage, or despotic, but he failed to criticize, or even comment on, the Turkish view of women. Not only did he fail to comment on the Turkish view of women, but the statement was contained within a larger section which discussed simple observations, such as the times when Turkish men ate and what meats were forbidden.

Shaler, in contrast, noted that “Ladies of condition seldom walk abroad. Though these secluded dames bloom as it were in the desert, from the complaints of their husbands respecting their extravagance in dress, it may be inferred that they exercise no inconsiderable portion of influence in society, and are perhaps silently preparing the public for a restoration of the rights, of which barbarism and ignorance have defrauded them.”<sup>79</sup> While barbarism and ignorance had stripped women of their

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<sup>76</sup> Carey, *Short History*, 22.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>78</sup> Stevens, *An Historical Account*, 211.

<sup>79</sup> Shaler, *Sketches*, 62.

rights, the women of Algiers were “less slaves to their husbands,” according to Shaler, “than to customs and long received notions of decorum and propriety.”<sup>80</sup>

The ways in which Stevens, Carey, and Shaler described, or failed to characterize, their observations on the treatment of women in Algerine society not only highlights how early Americans may have viewed the Algerines, but it also suggests a great deal about how these authors, and their contemporary American audience, viewed the place and role of women in their own society. Carey did not see the use of the veil as abnormal because modest dress was the expected norm for women in contemporary American society. While the veil may have differed from what was worn by women in turn of the eighteenth century United States, its intent and purpose did not differ. Stevens, and some of his contemporary readers, may have very well agreed with the idea that women were inferior in creation to men, which would explain why Stevens did not see this belief as evidence of the Turks’ barbarous nature. Shaler, on the other hand, viewed the restriction of women to the home as a barbarous defrauding of their rights, but he did not seem to think that men in Algerine society actively forced women into this role. It was more the result of inherited tradition. One wonders if Shaler thought the restrictions on women in his own newly liberated society were not the direct fault of his sex, but the result of ‘inherited tradition.’

### **Public Reception**

It is certainly important to examine the ways in which the Barbary commentaries stereotyped the Arabs, Moors, and Turks; yet, the question remains to

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

what extent these characterizations were known and understood by broader American society. Unfortunately, no scholar has extensively collected the publication data on the Barbary histories in the way that the publication history of the captivity narratives has been documented, but one can venture to guess that the Barbary histories were not as popular as the sexually tantalizing “authentic” adventure narratives of the urban and Saharan captivity genres. The lack of publication data notwithstanding, one can still get a sense of American society’s understanding of the inhabitants of Barbary from the histories themselves. Shaler specifically comments on what he believes society’s broad understanding of the Algerines to be, stating that “From remote antiquity the inhabitants of this country have been styled inconstant and treacherous; this imputation may be regarded as not unfounded now, but they are far from being the ferocious barbarians which the term Algerines seems by common consent to imply.”<sup>81</sup> Society’s general view of the Arabs, Moors, and Turks of Algiers as a group of “treacherous” and “ferocious barbarians” falls in line nicely with Stevens’, Carey’s and Shaler’s discussion of the inherently flawed barbarian inhabitants of Algiers.

Shaler’s statement on society’s common understanding of the Algerine raises another important point: was it the histories and the Barbary captivity works that were constructing and then reinforcing these stereotypes for society? Or did early American society already possess and understand these stereotypes and the Barbary literature was simply a reflection of this? In reality, the answer probably lies somewhere in the middle. The stereotypes present in the Barbary literature certainly did not emerge *ex nihilo*, but had to be present, at varying levels, throughout society. For more well-read

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 55.

and knowledgeable Americans, these works probably served more as a reinforcement of what they already believed to be true of the Barbary Arabs, Moors, and Turks; whereas the literature probably served as more of a construction and education for Americans who were “unacquainted with the barbarous character and manners of the Turks,” Arabs, and Moors.<sup>82</sup> In this regard, the stereotypes that were prevalent throughout the Barbary literature were the result of both society pulling the Barbary canon towards those conclusions and the Barbary literary field pushing other segments of society towards those very same conclusions.

In Shaler’s remark on what the term “Algerine” regularly implied, it appeared that Shaler was about to go against what society believed and what Stevens, Carey, and Shaler himself had written. Shaler did, in fact, for a short passage, take a surprisingly positive view of the Algerines. While he acknowledged that there was some grounding for society’s interpretation of the Algerines as “inconstant and treacherous,” he went on to argue that the characterizations of them as “ferocious barbarians” were unfounded, noting that:

They are a people of very insinuating address, and in the common relations of life, I have found them civil, courteous, and humane. Neither have I ever remarked anything in the character of these people that discovers extraordinary bigotry, fanaticism, or hatred of those who profess a different religion; they profess the Mohammedan creed, and fulfill with the utmost scrupulousness the rites which it ordains, but without affectation, and as far as I have remarked, without hostility to those who adopt different measures to conciliate the divine favour. I am well aware that this character of the Algerines is contrary to what has been heretofore promulgated, and to the general belief of the world; but my impressions of them, which I have received from a long

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 19.

residence in Barbary, differ very much from the general opinion, particularly within the last fifty years.<sup>83</sup>

Shaler's positive understanding broke from the established image of Algiers in that nearly all the Barbary literature took an overwhelmingly negative view of the Algerines and reinforced decidedly negative characterizations of the Arabs, Moors, and Turks.

Despite what his personal interactions may have showed him, Shaler returned to the standard line that was established in the works of Stevens and Carey (two men who had never been to Algiers). Nearly a hundred pages after detailing his personal encounters with the Algerines, Shaler claimed that "In the possession of a civilized and industrious people, this portion of Africa might, even within our own time, aspire to every sort of prosperity; and to the glory of civilizing a vast continent, whose inhabitants are as yet enshrouded in the night of barbarism."<sup>84</sup> Despite how easy it would have been for a civilized people to restore Barbary to its former glory, the "barbarous character and ignorance of the Turks" was entrenched to such a degree that it would "forbid any hope of a change for the better."<sup>85</sup>

Shaler's own personal interactions may have suggested to him that the Algerines were not the all-encompassing barbaric, savage, despotic, and violent people that they had been portrayed to be. But Shaler could not quite bring himself to argue that. He ignored what he observed on the ground and opted for the established, and possibly institutionalized, stereotypical view of Algiers. Shaler's failure to confront

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 168.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.,

what he knew to be incorrect, or at the very least, exaggerated, however, was not that uncommon. In his commentary on nineteenth-century travel writing, Edward Said noted that it was, and still is, the case “that people, places, and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes.”<sup>86</sup> Shaler’s firsthand experience may have showed him one version of Barbary, but the preexisting Barbary literature and society had convinced him of another, a discourse which he could not easily, and never did, abandon.

An interesting and informative way to measure how Americans may have perceived the Algerines is to look at the personal writings of any Americans who visited Algiers and privately assessed what they saw. From 1796-1797 an American diplomatic agent, Joel Barlow, was in Algiers negotiating a treaty with the dey on behalf of the United States. During his time in Algiers, Barlow sent his wife, who was residing in Paris at the time, a number of letters, many of which contained his impressions of the inhabitants of the Barbary Coast. These letters reflect how an American, albeit an atypical American—Barlow was educated, spoke French, traveled in many parts of the world, and while he was not rich, he was certainly better off than many—viewed the Regency and its inhabitants.

The more specific aspects of the stereotypical constructions that were present in Stevens’, Carey’s, and Shaler’s writings were not manifested in Barlow’s writings; one can assume that a discussion of the despotic Turks was probably not what Barlow wanted to converse about with the wife that he so dearly missed. But he did draw an

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<sup>86</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 93.

overwhelmingly negative picture that was similar, if not more extreme, than what the Barbary commentators came to write in the years following Barlow's departure from Algiers. On March 8, 1796, Barlow wrote to his wife that "The good wind, of which I spoke to you in Alicante, lasted only a little while; it changed into a terrible tempest... Then, after we had been cast about for three days from heaven to hell, it drove us to a port which certainly belongs to neither, since they are not men who inhabit it. This port is called Algiers."<sup>87</sup> Stevens, Shaler, and Carey often wrote of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Algiers as barbarous, inherently flawed, and ignorant. But to Barlow they were not even human. Barlow continued to write of the Algerines as not entirely human or, at best, the lowest form of humanity. On May 8, 1796 Barlow speculated to his wife what living in Algiers permanently as a consul would be like. He claimed that while "there are pleasures here, one cannot, for one has feelings, separate them from worries, from torments which result from the contemplation of customs which attest to the lowest debasement of the human species."<sup>88</sup> The Arabs, Moors, and Turks of Algiers were not simply inherently barbaric, ferocious, despotic, and ignorant to Barlow; they were the lowest form of the human species, unmatched in their barbarous nature by any other people or culture. What exactly Barlow saw in Algiers that was so troubling to him remains a mystery. He never did specify to his wife what the exact customs were which seemed to horrify him so much.

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<sup>87</sup> Miller Cantor, "A Connecticut Yankee in a Barbary Court: Joel Barlow's Algerian Letters to His Wife," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 19.1 (Jan. 1962), 95.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 99.

## **Conclusion**

The Barbary Coast commentaries of Stevens, Carey, and Shaler revealed a great deal about the ways in which the Algerines as a whole and the Arabs, Moors, and Turks as specific groups were stereotyped for early American audiences. At the most basic level, the Algerines were barbarous, savage, ignorant and incapable of returning Barbary to the greatness it experienced under Roman rule. At the more specific level, the Turks and their government were directly associated with a level of despotism that had never been seen before in history and led to the destruction of Barbary. The Arab and the Moor were conflated as natural criminals and thieves. We also see the beginnings of a racial divide being drawn among the three. The Arab and the Moor were “tawny” barbarians, as both Carey and Stevens noted in their comments on the thievery of the Arab and the Moor. Their similar skin tone furthered their conflation, a theme which, as we will see, was even more prevalent in the Saharan captivity narratives, and set them apart from the lighter-skinned Turk.



### Chapter 3

#### URBAN CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES

The histories and commentaries of Carey, Shaler, and Stevens offered only part of the picture that Americans were receiving of the Barbary Coast and its Muslim inhabitants. Considerably more important were the immensely popular Barbary captivity tales that filled bookshelves in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Whereas the Barbary commentaries often constructed a more singular stereotypical view of the Algerines as a whole, the urban captivity tales predominantly staged and stereotyped the Turk. It is within the urban captivity subgenre that the Turks' specific stereotypes—sexual deviance, unrestrained lust, and cruel and violent character—were developed fully. These characteristics are what made up the essence of the archetypal Turk and set him (or her) apart from the Arab and the Moor. The inherently despotic and tyrannical nature of the Turks that was seen in the Barbary commentaries was also prevalent throughout the urban captivity accounts, but Turkish despotism was connected to Islam and the subjugation of women in a way that was not seen in the Barbary commentaries. Additionally, the nature urban captivity added to the commentaries' discourse on the racial separation between the Arab, Moor, and Turk, which further reinforced their separation from the Western white American.

Of all the urban captivity narratives, two of the most popular accounts, which will be analyzed here, were Mary Velnet's *The Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mary Velnet, Who Was Seven Years a Slave in Tripoli* (1800) and Maria Martin's 1806 publication, *History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin who was six*

*years a Slave in Algiers*. If the titles appear eerily similar it is because, as James R. Lewis pointed out (though it is obvious to the reader) the latter was simply a plagiarized version of the former.<sup>89</sup> The plagiarism notwithstanding, Velnet's narrative was released in six editions between 1800 and 1828. Martin's version of Velnet's narrative came out in twelve editions from 1806 to 1818.<sup>90</sup> Ironically, it appears as if the plagiarized account was more widely known than the original. While there were urban captivity narratives published by actual captives, these two accounts were, by numerous scholars' best estimates, entirely fictional. No records were found by Khalid Bekkaoui or Paul Baepler to suggest that either Velnet or Martin were real people or that the ships they were supposed to have traveled on ever existed.<sup>91</sup> Yet, both works claimed to be factual accounts of real-life Barbary captives. Both narratives were accompanied with the subtitle, "Written by Herself," to assure the audiences that the details of Velnet's and Martin's experiences were not exaggerated by an editor. Furthermore, both accounts began with the authors explaining who they were and why they were traveling, which served to give more authenticity and humanity to the authors.

Written in the first person, Velnet's narrative began with a self-introduction. "I am a native of Italy, and was born in Modena, in the year 1774." Velnet's reasons

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<sup>89</sup> James R. Lewis, "Savages of the Seas: Barbary Captivity Tales and Images of Muslims in the Early Republic," *Journal of American Culture*, 13.2 (1990), 78.

<sup>90</sup> Paul Baepler, *White Slaves African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 304-5.

<sup>91</sup> Baepler, *Whites Slaves*, 11. Khalid Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives: Narratives of Enslavement, 1735-1830* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 28.

for traveling were plausible and seemingly realistic; her husband had gone to Canton and decided to stay for several months and wished for his wife to join him. Velnet's husband wrote to her, "desiring me in the most urgent manner to take passage myself, together with a little daughter (our only child) for that place."<sup>92</sup> Martin, on the other hand, was "born in the year 1779...was married to captain Henry Martin" and "being ever desirous of visiting some distant part of the world," Martin, "solicited and obtained the consent of [her] husband to accompany him on a voyage to Minorca."<sup>93</sup> These seemingly minuscule details, written in the first person, gave both accounts a definite air of authenticity. The genuine-sounding nature of these narratives suggests that the early American readers who encountered any one of the eighteen editions of either work most probably understood them to be retellings of factual events. That is not to say that fictional works cannot, and did not, create and reinforce stereotypes—some of the urban captivity works were explicitly fictional—but the seeming authenticity of these works, supported by their "firsthand" evidence, gave Velnet's and Martin's characterizations more credence. Additionally, when these very same stereotypes were utilized in explicitly fictional works, they had the backing of an entire subgenre of "factual narratives" to remind the audience that they were not exaggerations but "accurate" depictions of Turks.

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<sup>92</sup> N.a., *An Affecting History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mary Velnet, An Italian Lady who was Seven Years a Slave in Tripoli* (Sag-Harbor NY: Alden Spooner, 1806), 3-4.

<sup>93</sup> N.a., *A History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin Who was Six Years a Slave in Algiers* (Philadelphia: Rakestraw, 1809), 59.

Mary Velnet and Maria Martin may not have been enslaved on the Barbary Coast, but John Foss was, without a doubt, an actual Barbary captive. Foss was an American sailor who was captured on board the brig *Polly* in August of 1793. He was eventually redeemed with three of his surviving shipmates in July of 1796, and returned to the United States in August of the following year.<sup>94</sup> His narrative, *A Journal of the Captivity and Sufferings of John Foss*, was released in two editions, both in 1798.<sup>95</sup> In his preface to the public, Foss assured his audience of his work's authenticity and explained his reasons for writing such an account. Foss' narrative was "extracted from a journal kept merely for the writer's satisfaction." It was written "without the most distant idea of its ever being made public," which meant that he had "no inducement to exaggerate [his] sufferings."<sup>96</sup> Foss' narrative was a "simple statement of facts," and he hoped only to narrate in "as concise a view as possible, some important matters of fact that occurred, during our long, tedious, and cruel captivity."<sup>97</sup> By contrast, Susanna Rowson's 1794 play, *Slaves in Algiers*, was not a written urban captivity tale, but it followed the major conventions of the urban captivity narrative and utilized, constructed, and reinforced many of the same stereotypes for its various audiences. Rowson's play was upfront with its audience about its origins. In the printed version of the play, Rowson stated that "some part of

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<sup>94</sup> Baepler, *White Slaves*, 72.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 305.

<sup>96</sup> John Foss, *A Journal of The Captivity and Sufferings of John Foss* (Newburyport: A. March, 1798), *To The Public*.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*.

the plot [was] taken from the Story of the captive, related by Cervantes,” by which she meant the captives’ tale in *Don Quixote*, but the rest of the play was “entirely the offspring of fancy.”<sup>98</sup>

Two other works, though not explicitly urban captivity tales, are worthy of consideration. Charles J. Peterson’s (pseudo. Harry Danforth) 1846 publication, *The Algerine* was a dime novel which depicted an American vessel under pursuit by an Algerine corsair. In spite of the fact that the characters in *The Algerine*, were not held as slaves in Barbary, the story still played on many of the same stereotypes that were employed in the actual urban captivity narratives. Peterson’s work, similarly to Rowson’s, did not claim any level of direct veracity, but in the preface, the publisher stated that Peterson’s stories were valued because of their truthfulness.<sup>99</sup> The last work included in this chapter is Peter Markoe’s 1787 book, *The Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania*. This epistolary novel consisted of a correspondence between an Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania, Mehmet, and his handler in Algiers, Solyman. Markoe’s work, however, was not exactly a typical epistolary novel. Markoe’s name was not attached to the original version of the work. Instead the publisher claimed to have found a stack of letters dropped at his doorstep in the middle of the night, which were conveniently translated by an unknown source who asked that the letters be published for the United States’ benefit. It is widely assumed among scholars, such as

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<sup>98</sup> Susanna Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers* (Philadelphia: Wrigley & Berriman, 1794), II.

<sup>99</sup> Charles J. Peterson (pseud. Harry Danforth), *The Algerine and Other Tales* (Boston: Gleason’s Publishing Hall NO. 1½, 1846), “Note By The Publisher”.

Timothy Marr, that Markoe was the original author of the book.<sup>100</sup> Markoe's novel was predominantly commenting on the United States: he used his Algerine characters as outside observers to comment on what he believed to be the strengths and weaknesses of the early Republic and American society. The novel, however, was published before any of the Barbary commentaries, urban captivity tales, or Saharan captivity narratives analyzed here were written. Because of its early publication date, Markoe's novel can serve as a sort of litmus test to see if, and how, the stereotypes utilized in the immensely popular Barbary literature were used in older non-captivity works.

### **Sexually Deviant Turks**

The urban captivity literature typecasted the Turks in numerous ways, but the stereotypes of sexual deviance and unrestrained lust were what made up the essence of the archetypal Turk. Intertwined with this construction was the Turk's seemingly violent and cruel nature, since violence was generally the vehicle through which the Turk's sexual desires were advanced on hapless women. These constructions culminated in the perception that the Turk represented a threat to women, specifically Western white women. The sexual deviance and unrestrained lust of the Turk manifested itself slightly differently in the urban captivity works, but, in the end, they all constructed extraordinarily similar stereotypical images. In *Mary Velnet* and *Maria Martin* these stereotypes were built and reinforced through the use of repeated scenes of sexualized violence and disguised rape scenes. James Lewis points out that early

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<sup>100</sup> Peter Markoe, *The Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania* (Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2008), VII.

American culture prohibited explicit sexual material. So authors employed sexualized violence as a stand-in for rape scenes, and as Lewis suggests, these scenes' intended purposes would not have been lost on their contemporary readers.<sup>101</sup> The first example of such a scene in *Mary Velnet* began with her description of a torture device, which clearly only had one purpose; Velnet writes:

The fellow (a frightful looking Turk) led me to a remote and dismal looking cavern...I now found myself in a large square room...in the centre of this room was erected a small stage, at the four corners of which were four posts erected, entwined with ropes, and which turned by means of handspikes much after the manner of a windlass; about mid-way of the platform were drove a great number of spears or spikes, with their points projecting up.<sup>102</sup>

The machines' intended purpose should be clear: the function of the ropes spreading the victim for the phallic-shaped spear or spike, which happen to be situated at mid-body need no further explanation. This scene's ability to construct the Turks as sexually deviant beings relied on Velnet's purported factuality. Under the pretense of actually having seen this machine, she described it to what must have been a horrified audience. Furthermore, while the man who led her to the room was a Turk, in the entire account, which took place in Tripoli, the only race ever mentioned by name was the Turks. Because of Velnet's sole reference to the Turks, this horrid machine was their creation, not the Arabs, nor the Moors.

Velnet's construction of the sexually threatening Turk was reinforced and solidified for her audience by a scene in which she was forced to endure the torture

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<sup>101</sup> Lewis, "Savages of the Seas," 78.

<sup>102</sup> N.a., *Mary Velnet*, 13-15.

device. Under the pretense of these events actually having occurred, Velnet recounted to her audience that:

On my arrival [to the torture room], orders were given to the four Turks selected to execute the Bashaw's barbarous laws, to strip me; after being divested of my cloathing, one of the monsters seizing me by the hair, at the same another taking me by the feet, stretched me on the platform of the horrid machine ! The spears or spikes which it contained, soon pierced my flesh to the bone ; four ropes were then made fast to my wrists and ankles, and drawn taught by means of the four posts.<sup>103</sup>

Again, it was only the Turks who were involved in these horrid acts. The frequency with which scenes of this nature appeared in Velnet's and Martin's accounts must have suggested to their contemporary audiences that these were not atypical occurrences, but frequent events in the daily lives of female Barbary captives.

Velnet's and Martin's narratives, however, did not only place Turkish men in the role of the violent sexual deviant. There was a scene in both narratives in which a woman sexually assaulted the female captives. In Velnet's account, she recalled to her American readers that this woman:

Would not unfrequently compel us, for the least offense, to strip ourselves naked, and then stand within a few feet of a large fire, until our bodies were nearly covered with blisters! At other times she would compel us to stand with our bare feet on live coals of fire! And she once destroyed the life of a poor French captive, by divesting her of her clothes and then strewing her naked body with hot rice.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 22.



As Lewis puts it aptly, “The connotations of ‘strewing her naked body with hot rice’ should not require explanation.”<sup>105</sup> Velnet’s encounter with her female overseer only served to further reinforce the idea that the both the male and female Turks of the Barbary Coast were violent sexual deviants. In the plagiarized version, *Maria Martin*, the encounter was nearly identical, save for one detail; Martin told her audience that:

The Wretch would not unfrequently compel us for the least offense to strip ourselves naked, and then stand for a given number of minutes within a few feet of a blazing fire! – at other times she would throw hot embers and coals of fire in our bosoms, and shocking as it may appear, she in my presence deprived of life a poor unfortunate girl by strewing her naked body with hot rice!<sup>106</sup>

The throwing of hot embers and coals into Martin’s breasts raised the sexual violence in Martin’s piece a step further, but one can see how both narratives created and reinforced a similar stereotypical image of the Turk. Yet, one must also take note of how violence and cruelty were intrinsically part of the Turk’s sexual deviance. There was always a great deal of violence and cruelty in these types of scenes—it is hard to imagine how a scene of implied rape would not have involved some level of violence—but it is worth noting that violence and cruelty were intertwined with the Turk’s sexual acts.

Whereas *Mary Velnet* and *Maria Martin* primarily constructed the Turk as sexually deviant, unrestrained, and threatening through implied rape scenes and sexualized violence, Susanna Rowson’s *Slaves in Algiers* built and reinforced the very same stereotypes in a slightly less violent manner. Because of the play’s ensemble

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<sup>105</sup> Lewis, “Savages of the Seas,” 78.

<sup>106</sup> N.a., *Maria Martin*, 86.

cast, it is important to establish who the characters were to prevent any confusion. *Slaves in Algiers* staged three “Moriscan” (Moorish) women—Zoriana (daughter of the dey), Fetnah (a concubine with British heritage who is an “American at heart”), and Selima (concubine)—the dey of Algiers (Muley Muloc, a Turk), a Renegade Jew (Ben Hassan), and six American captives—Augustus, Frederic, Henry, Constant, Rebecca, and Olivia. Prior to the beginning of the play, Fetnah resisted the sexual advances of the dey. In the first act she recounted those events to Selima, recalling that Muley Muloc said to her, “you [who] abuse my goodness, I have condescended to request you to love me,” at which point the dey, “gave me such a fierce look, as if he would say, and if you don’t love me I’ll cut your head off.”<sup>107</sup> After she told the dey she could not love him, Muloc cried out, “How! how, can’t love me?” at which he point, “he laid his hand upon his symetar.”<sup>108</sup> Fetnah, however, convinced the dey to spare her life.

The similarity of Velnet’s and Martin’s scenes of disguised rape with Rowson’s utilization of a sexually threatening Turkish dey—the difference in explicit violence notwithstanding—highlights how the urban captivity tales created and reinforced a nearly universal stereotype of the Turk. In a similar fashion to *Mary Velnet* and *Maria Martin*, *Slaves in Algiers*’s Turkish stereotypes were not just limited to males. In the fourth act of Rowson’s play, Sebastian, a Spanish slave who later aided the Americans in their attempted escape, made an aside to the audience in which he commented on the rapidity with which Fetnah and Frederic fell in love: “Well here

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<sup>107</sup> Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers*, 7.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

am I, Sebastian; who have been a slave, two years, six months, a fortnight and three days, and have, all that time worked in the garden of the Alcaide, who has twelve wives, thirty concubines, and two pretty daughters; and yet not one of the insensible husseys ever took a fancy to me.”<sup>109</sup> At the outset, this scene played on the Western fascination with the concept of the Turkish harem, but it also constructed the female Turk as a sexual deviant much in the manner of her male counterpart. While the audience may have taken the exact numbers as an exaggeration, Sebastian’s comment on the “insensible husseys” continued to build on the idea of the deviant and unrestrained Turk (male or female).

These sexually charged scenes not only appeared throughout the urban captivity literature, but the stereotypes constructed in them were often used to create dramatic tension or advance the plot plausibly in those same works. The utilization of the Turk’s stereotypes in this manner indicates that the readers of these works (or audiences in the case of Rowson’s play) would have already understood the specific aspects of the Turkish stereotypes because without that prior knowledge these scenes would have lost their dramatic potential. Both Peterson’s *The Algerine* and Rowson’s *Slaves in Algiers* contained these sorts of indicative passages. In *The Algerine*, an American sailor, Harry Danforth, was onboard an American merchant ship nearing Gibraltar. When a strange sail was spotted on the horizon the women on board—the captain’s wife, her sister, and Mary (Danforth’s friend, Frederic’s, bride)—were sent below deck to avoid causing a panic among them until the men were able to ascertain who was approaching them. Once ‘yonder sail’ was confirmed as an Algerine corsair

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 46.

the men made full sail in an attempt to outrun the pirates. As Danforth helplessly watched the corsair gain, he wondered, “How soon the most terrible of all fates might become the lot of the beautiful creatures at my side.”<sup>110</sup> While the short story was titled *The Algerine* and the corsair was an Algerine vessel, Peterson quickly informed his audience who the Algerines were: “Many of our countrymen had been captured by the Turks”; “how the Turks sail”; “but to go about like a nigger slave, with a chain tied to your leg, as the prisoners to these Turks”; “the Turk.”<sup>111</sup> As the corsair continued to gain, Frederick begged Danforth that “If I should fall in the struggle when these villains board us you will seek out Mary and plunge your dagger into her heart, to save her from a fate ten times worse for her and me than death... Promise me, -swear to me this!”<sup>112</sup> While one would certainly not want to see one’s wife carried off into slavery, Frederick begged his friend to murder his wife because he knew, and the audience should have understood, that her fate would have been ten times worse if the sexually unrestrained Turks took her away. The drama and tension of the story relied on the stereotypical Turks posing a sexual threat to the women on board the vessel. If the stereotype did not exist or if it was not well known among the contemporary American audience then the entire story would have lost its dramatic potential.

Nearly fifty years before Peterson’s short story was published, Rowson wrote a scene into her play where the Turkish sexual stereotypes were utilized in such a manner as to suggest a similar conclusion. In the third act of the play, Fetnah (the

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<sup>110</sup> Danforth, *The Algerine*, 11.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 10, 12, 12, and 13.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 12.

Moorish woman who wished to be American) met an American slave, Frederic, in the garden of the dey's palace. The two fell quickly in love and decided that if the opportunity arose, they would escape together. Suddenly, the dey came upon the two lovers and Fetnah had to come up with an excuse as to why she was alone with a Christian slave. Fetnah told the dey, "four or five Turks leap'd over the wall, and began to plunder the garden; I screamed...But the moment they saw me, they seized me, and would have forced me away, had not this gallant stranger run to my assistance."<sup>113</sup> The insinuation of what would have happened had the Turks "forced" Fetnah away should be clear. This scene not only further reinforced the sexual deviance and threatening nature of the Turks for Rowson's audiences, but it also suggests that these stereotypes were common knowledge. Fetnah's excuse to the dey had to be reasonable otherwise Frederic would have simply been executed on the spot for associating with one of the dey's favorite concubines. Rowson believed that it would have appeared plausible to the audience that a group of Turks were sexually threatening a woman, specifically a woman who Americans could have easily identified with. (The ways in which Fetnah discussed liberty made her appear more like a daughter of revolutionary Philadelphia or Boston than Algiers.) If the audience did not already understand that the Turks represented a threat to women because of their sexual deviance then this scene, and the entire play, would have suffered from a loss of realism and drama.

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<sup>113</sup> Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers*, 35-36.

Despite the frequency with which the sexually depraved and threatening Turk appeared in the urban captivity narratives discussed so far, this stereotype never emerged in John Foss' narrative. Not once did Foss characterize the Turks as sexually deviant, unrestrained, or lustful. Nor did he ever recount for his audience any episodes in which the Turks or Algerines were threatening Western white women. Foss noted that the dey of Algiers had "no Seraglio" despite what was "generally reported." He only had "one wife" and slept with her "but once a week."<sup>114</sup> How exactly Foss knew these details of the dey's personal life, or if they were even correct, is in many ways a nonfactor. He presented an image of the Turks as a whole, and the dey of Algiers specifically, that greatly contrasted with the image that was drawn in the other, more popular, urban captivity tales. The dey of Foss' narrative was the antithesis of the Turkish Cadi of Tenis in *Maria Martin* who had "no less than four hundred concubines" and often took "opium or a certain mixture compounded with brandy, cinnamom, aniseed, cloves and nutmegs."<sup>115</sup> If anything, Foss had the most reason to exaggerate what he actually saw in Algiers to produce a more exciting, and potentially profitable, account. Yet, he either chose to report what he believed to be true of Algiers and the dey or purposefully left out those details. The former seems to be the more likely answer.

Foss's narrative and Rowson's play were released in very short succession, but it appears that Foss' work did not become a blueprint for the urban captivity genre. The works that followed Foss and Rowson continued to reconstruct the stereotypes

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<sup>114</sup> Foss, *Journal of John Foss*, 44.

<sup>115</sup> N.a., *Maria Martin*, 74. Tenis was an Algerine city, but it is now commonly rendered as Ténès or Tenez.

that were present in Rowson's play, stereotypes that Rowson's audience seemingly already understood. The urban captivity narratives, then, were, just as the Barbary commentaries, both a representation of stereotypes that were believed to be true by some segments of society and, at the same time, an educational construction for Americans who were less well informed.

Just as Joel Barlow's letters provided an opportunity to see if the stereotypes that were constructed in the Barbary commentaries existed outside or predated those works, Peter Markoe's *Algerine Spy* can provide the reader with similar insights. In Markoe's novel, Mehmet believed that Rhode Island, due to its opposition to the constitution and William Shay's uprising, could be turned into an American Malta and used as a launching point for further attacks against the United States. Mehmet told his handler that America's "defenseless coasts, bays, and rivers may be plundered without the least risqué and their young men and *maidens triumphantly* carried into captivity."<sup>116</sup> Unlike the urban captivity narratives, Markoe's construction and utilization of the sexually threatening stereotype was not a major part of his work: the majority of novel was focused on the discussion of the strengths and weakness of American government and society. Mehmet's letter, however, still played on the stereotypical constructions that have been so far discussed, except that in Markoe's novel it was not the Turk who was threatening America's "young men and maidens" but the Algerines as a whole. It would be imprudent to assume that this was the only Barbary work where the sexual stereotypes of the Turks were generalized to the Algerine whole. But for the most part, it appears as if sexual deviance and

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<sup>116</sup> Peter Markoe, *The Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Prichard & Hall, 1787), 105. Emphasis added.

unrestrained lust were constructions that were predominantly left for the Turks. This seems even more apparent when one considers that in the female Saharan captivity narratives, as we will see, the women were never violated or sexually threatened directly by the Arabs or the Moors.

### **Violence Outside the Sexual Realm**

Despite the connection between the Turks' violent and cruel nature and their sexual deviance, the Turks were also constructed as cruel and violent beings outside of the sexual realm. After Velnet was brought to the torture room the first time, she was soon entrusted to care for a victim of the Turkish torture device. "On entering an adjoining room," Velnet recounted to their audience,

The first object which presented itself to my view, was a miserable person of my own sex, stretched out upon a matross, mangled and bruised, in an unmerciful manner...every limb of her body wrested out of joint, her eyes started from their sockets, pieces of flesh torn from various parts of her body of the bigness of a person's finger, and her body otherwise bruised and mangled in a most shocking manner.<sup>117</sup>

This sort of detailed gory imagery must have left the reader with only a few possible conclusions regarding the violent and cruel tendencies of the Turks. This scene was only in Velnet's narrative and existed more within the sexual realm than outside of it, but both authors described, in similarly gory detail, the execution of a male French slave. In Martin's narrative, the "grand Vizier" of Algiers (or the bashaw of Tripoli in Velnet's account, both of whom were Turks) ordered the unnamed French slave to be executed for attempting to escape the city. In both accounts the entire city's slave

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<sup>117</sup> N.a., *Mary Velnet*, 17.



population was marched out to bear witness. The passage is long, but it is worth quoting in full:

The grand Vizier...gave orders for his executioners (three barbarous looking Turks) to bring forward the unhappy victim...One of them approaching the prisoner, threw him upon his back...a cord about the bigness of a person's thumb was next made fast to his left leg, a little above the ancle bone, with which, by means of a windlass, he was drawn to the fatal shears, which at the very moment were set in motion, slicing his left foot and leg in pieces less than half an ounce weight!— A scene like this, was too much for human eyes to witness! A view of which, I was enabled to prevent, by closing my eyes; but alas! I could not close my ears against the shrieks and heart-piercing cries of the unhappy sufferer!—the pains of death, and torment were of but short indurance, for shocking to relate, in less than six minutes, there was not a piece of the unhappy sufferer to be found ...there appeared nothing of him but a mass of goared flesh cut into a thousand pieces. When these savage monsters had sufficiently glutted themselves with the blood of their victim, orders were given to reform the procession.<sup>118</sup>

Martin and Velnet both recounted for their readers an event in which the Turkish vizier (or bashaw), seated on “a lofty stage, a station [which] was always prepared for him on such occasions” and his “body of Turks, about 150 in number,” reveled in the gruesome execution of a French slave. Martin’s and Velnet’s passage also seems to have implied to their readers that these sorts of ‘celebratory’ executions were not uncommon as there was a sort of designated routine for such events (as suggested by the construction of the vizier’s or bashaw’s stage). If the “savage monsters” glutting “themselves with the blood of their victim” was not enough to construct the Turk as inherently violent and cruel, Martin continued, stating, “we return[ed] in the same manner we came, my master riding in front brandishing his cimeter, the point of

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<sup>118</sup> N.a., *Maria Martin*, 92-93. The passage appeared nearly verbatim in N.a., *Mary Velnet*, 32-33.

which, the callous hearted wretch had taken pains to stain with the blood of the murdered captive.”<sup>119</sup> The passage was reproduced verbatim in Velnet’s book except that it was the bashaw of Tripoli who stained his “ciemtar” with the blood of the French slave.<sup>120</sup>

Martin’s narrative continually emphasized the inherent cruelty and violent character of her and her fellow captives’ Turkish masters. Martin’s master was a “blood-thirsty, cruel and inhumane monster” who, according to the slave Malcome, “had put several of his slaves to death for no greater fault than that of complaining of indisposition and an inability to perform their daily tasks.” Malcome had had his “nails torn from his fingers” by this Turk for trying to communicate with the English Consul.<sup>121</sup> Not only did the Turks in Martin’s and Velnet’s accounts seem to take pleasure in the gruesome and cruel treatment of their slaves, but they evidently did all in their power to prevent them from ransoming themselves. This seems ironic when one considers the fact that the real value of Barbary captives was the ransom money that their masters’ received for their redemption. There was an earlier episode in Martin’s narrative which may have cemented the image of the inherently cruel and violent Turk in the minds of Martin’s early American readers. As Christian slaves were constructing the Turkish Cadi’s house he, according to Martin:

bastinadoed some for going too fast, while others, thinking to mend that fault, were drubbed by him for going too slow; one poor creature, trembling for fear what would follow, went bowing before his cart, but

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<sup>119</sup> N.a., *Maria Martin*, 93.

<sup>120</sup> N.a., *Mary Velnet*, 33.

<sup>121</sup> N.a., *Maria Martin*, 84 and 85.

the Cadi gave a spring, tumbled the poor wretch down and drove over him. Another following him, ran to assist his fellow creature, but the Cadi threw his dart and struck him in the shoulder; the slave drew it out, and upon his knees presented it to him again, which the Cadi (when the man had got a little distance from him) darted the second time into his body! The poor creature drew it out once more, and, covered with blood, gave it to him back again, but as he was stooping, he fell down with loss of blood at the barbarian's feet, who did him the favour to pin him to the earth through his back.<sup>122</sup>

The way in which Martin, under the pretense of veracity, depicted the Cadi's treatment of his Christian slaves would have certainly shocked her contemporary readers, but what may have been more shocking and terrifying was the way in which the Cadi made a sort of game out of his cruelty. Allowing the slave to walk away, only to dart him again, presumably in the back, seems to indicate that the Cadi, in Martin's construction, derived some sort of pleasure from torturing and murdering his Christian slaves.

### **Turkish Despotism or Islamic Despotism?**

The Barbary commentaries continually referenced the seemingly inherent despotic nature of the Turks; yet, in the larger scope of the Barbary literary field, they were not unique in this aspect. In the urban captivity narratives and Markoe's novel, Turkish despotism emerged as a theme, but it was often connected, in varying degrees, with Islam. Nowhere is the overlap between Turkish despotism and Islam more prominent than in Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers* and Markoe's *Algerine Spy*.

The first act of Rowson's play contained a scene in which Selima and Fetnah discussed liberty and their relationships with the dey. Selima could not understand

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 73.

why Fetnah was upset when she was the dey's favorite concubine. In response, Fetnah declared that, "In the first place, I wish for liberty. Why do you talk of my being a favorite; is the poor bird that is confined in a cage consoled for the loss of freedom? No!"<sup>123</sup> Fetnah explained that she hated the dey and declared to Selima that she would not give into his sexual advances. Selima, afraid for Fetnah's life, asked her "how is it Fetnah, that you have conceived such an aversion to the manners of a country where you were born?", to which Fetnah responded "You are mistaken- I was not born in Algiers, I drew my first breath in England, my father Ben Hassan, as he is now called, was a Jew. I can scarcely remember our arrival here, and have been educated in the Moorish religion, tho' I always had a natural antipathy to their manners."<sup>124</sup> In Rowson's construction the Moorish religion (Islam) subjugated women to the sexual desires of men. Selima was so shocked by Fetnah's words because the proper course dictated by the manners of their country (Algiers) and their religion (Islam) meant that Fetnah should have given into the dey's sexual advances. Conversely, if the Moorish religion, in Rowson's construction, inspired women to be passive subjects to men, then it granted men the despotic control of women. Yet, Fetnah was able to resist the subjugation of the despotic dey because of her British heritage, the influence of an American slave her father owned (Rebecca), and her natural antipathy to the customs of the Moorish religion. Selima, on the other hand, had no desire for liberty and willfully accepted her subjugation because her religion and society taught her to.

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<sup>123</sup> Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers*, 5.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

Rowson's linkage between Turkish despotism, Islam, and the subjugation of women continued in the third scene of act one when Zoriana, the daughter of the dey, and Olivia, an American captive the dey wanted converted to Islam so he could marry her, were introduced. The scene began with Zoriana's inquiry into Olivia's unseen failed escape attempt and then, much to Olivia's surprise, Zoriana's offer to aid her in another escape plan. Seeing Olivia's shock at such an offer, Zoriana responded, "Be not alarmed sweet Olivia, I am a Christian in my heart and I love a Christian slave, to whom I have conveyed money and jewels, sufficient to ransom himself and several others."<sup>125</sup> Zoriana sought liberty for herself and Olivia from the "land of captivity" because she was a Christian in her heart as Fetnah was an American in her heart. Rowson constructed Christianity as the religion of liberty and freedom, which left Islam as the religion of despotism and subjugation.

The play then shifted back to Fetnah's apartment where she and Selima continued their previous discussion over the dey and liberty. Fetnah began the scene by asking Selima "Now will you pretend to say, you are happy here, and that you love the Dey?", to which Fetnah responded, "I have been here many years; the Dey has been very good to me, and my chief employment has been to wait on his daughter, Zoriana, till I was appointed to attend you, to you perhaps, he may be an object of disgust; but looking up to him, as a kind and generous master, to me he appears amiable."<sup>126</sup> Fetnah retorted:

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 39.

Oh! To be sure, he is a most amiable creature; I think I see him now, seated on his cushion, a bowl of sherbet by his side, and a long pipe in his mouth. Oh! How charmingly the tobacco must perfume his whiskers- here, Mustapha, says he, 'Go, bid the slave Selima come to me'-well it does not signify, that word slave does so stick in my throat- I wonder how any woman of spirit can gulp it down.<sup>127</sup>

Selima's response was a simple one, confirming for Rowson's audience the link between Islam, Turkish despotism, and subjugation: "We are accustomed to it."<sup>128</sup> In this case, 'we' referred to the women of the Moorish faith who were accustomed to slavery and subjugation at the hands of a despotic Turk. This group, however, did not include Fetnah because of her aversion to the Moorish faith and her inner "American spirit" or Zoriana because of her inner "Christian spirit."

Despite the fact that Rowson's play utilized a stereotypically despotic Turk and built a connection between Islam and the subjugation of women to those despotic Turks, her play could have been intended, and probably was, as a commentary on the status of women in the United States. Despite the revolutionary rhetoric of liberty, representation, and equality, American women found themselves in a very similar position after the war of independence than they were in before. Rowson's staging of Moorish women with American and Christian influences trying to liberate themselves from the oppressive yoke of a sexually deviant, violent, and threatening Turkish despot was meant as an allegory of sorts to inspire American women to realize their natural equality, if not superiority, over the male sex, and their lack of rights in the

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 40.

newly liberated United States.<sup>129</sup> In this way, Rowson's play is revealing because it suggests that as early as 1794 American women were already conceptualizing a different place for themselves in society than the one they were given.

Markoe's *Algerine Spy*, similarly to Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers*, built a bridge between Islam, the subjugation of women, and despotism. But the despotism in his account, like the sexual deviance, was not just limited to the Turks; it was expanded to encompass the Algerines as a whole. Mehmet's race was never mentioned, he was simply the *Algerine spy*. In the last few letters of the book, Mehmet found out that he has been branded a traitor by the dey and that his property, slaves, and personal wealth have been seized. To make matters worse, his wife, Fatima, fled Algiers with a Christian slave. Following her escape, Fatima converted to Christianity, changed her name to Maria, and married Alvarez, a former slave. In a letter to Solyman, Alvarez claimed that he owed Mehmet no apology because Mehmet never truly had Fatima's affections. "She endured his company, because she was his slave, and her mildness of temper prevented her from expressing discontent."<sup>130</sup> Just as Selima was a slave to the Turkish dey's tyranny, Fatima was subject to Mehmet's Algerine tyranny and it was not until she became a Christian that she was free of his subjugation.

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<sup>129</sup> For more information on the development of Rowson's republican ideals in her works see Eve Kornfeld, "Women in Post-Revolutionary American Culture: Susanna Haswell Rowson's American Career 1793-1824," *The Journal of American Culture*, 6.4 (1983): 56-62. Kornfeld points out that at the turn of nineteenth century Rowson's works began to emphasize her republican beliefs more and more directly until the twilight of her career when she retreated from her republican political demands and began to focus more on the domestic sphere.

<sup>130</sup> Markoe, *Algerine Spy*, 124.

Following Alvarez's letter, the novel concluded with Mehmet's final letter to Solyman. In response to the details of his conviction as a traitor and Fatima's conversion Mehmet writes, "Ruined, didst thou say? No; I am preserved. I am free and delight in the freedom of others, and am no longer *either a slave or a tyrant*. At once a Christian and a Pennsylvanian, I am doubly an advocate for the rights of mankind."<sup>131</sup> While a Muslim, Mehmet was a slave to the despotism of the Dey and a tyrant to his wife and concubines (on two occasions there were references to Mehmet's harem and his concubines in Algiers).<sup>132</sup> But with his conversion to Christianity, he was at liberty from the Dey and his concubines were no longer subject to his tyranny. Markoe's construction of Christianity as the religion of liberty and Islam as the religion of tyranny was firmly established when Mehmet ended the letter by writing that as a Pennsylvanian he hoped to enjoy "the united blessings of freedom and Christianity."<sup>133</sup>

Markoe's construction of Algerine and Islamic despotism has to be seen in the larger context of his work. His novel was primarily concerned with pointing out what he believed to be the flaws and strengths of the governmental institutions of the early American Republic. Markoe's constructions, therefore then, can be seen as falling in with Robert Allison's conclusion that the Barbary States and the broader Islamic world served as a "lesson for Americans in what not to do."<sup>134</sup> In Markoe's work

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 126. Emphasis added.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 32 and 50.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 129.

<sup>134</sup> Allison, *Crescent Obscured*, XVII.



Islamic despotism, rather than Turkish despotism, was the political lesson that Americans had to pay attention to. America's governmental institutions were working, hence Mehmet's mostly positive analysis of them in the novel, but America's early success had to be guarded, lest the country fall into the same decay as the Barbary States. The American way of liberty and Christianity led Mehmet away from his life of despotism, slavery, and failure, to one of prosperity and happiness. (In the end of the narrative Mehmet, now a Pennsylvanian, owned a successful farm for himself and had bought a home for Alvarez and Maria.) The ways in which these early American writers and thinkers used the Barbary States and broader Islamic world as political lessons suggests that these thinkers truly believed that the United States was building a new type of society, a type of society which the world had never seen before, and it was a society they were determined to see succeed.

### **Islam**

The spectrum of views that the urban captivity narratives presented of Islam were not just limited to what was seen in Markoe's and Rowson's works, but were as varied as the constructions that were made in the Barbary commentaries. In Velnet's account, similarly to Carey's *Short History*, Islam was largely absent from the narrative. The few times that Islam was mentioned, it was usually in connection to an assertion by a Turk that a dead Christian would suffer eternal punishment for his religion. After the first victim of the rape device succumbed to her wounds, Velnet wrote that "as soon as he [the Turkish attendant] entered the room I pointed to where the corpse lay, he viewing it for a moment, exclaimed, 'arro ne Christia, Mahomet niz lori benjah ik fai,' (she was a Christian, and Mahomet will doom her to eternal

punishment), saying this he departed.”<sup>135</sup> While a modern reader may find the statement troubling, it was, and still is, a common belief among followers of the major faiths that they, and only they, will be saved. Velnet herself did not find the comment offensive enough to warrant a response and the narrative moved on with her burying the victim. The lack of religious discourse in Velnet’s account seems to suggest that the author of the narrative took little issue with Islam itself or was generally disinterested in religion all together.

Despite the fact that Martin’s narrative heavily plagiarized from Velnet’s account, the author constructed a much different view of Islam. The Moors of Algiers, according to Martin, were “mistrustful to the last degree, false, jealous, and the very picture of ignorance...They abominate the Christians, for the very word in their language signifies dog; and are continually seeking means to destroy them.” Martin explained to her readers that the Moors were like this because “Mahomet has taught them in his Alcoran, that all those who die fighting against Christians enter into paradise, in triumph; even their houses, if they die in battle are immediately translated to heaven.”<sup>136</sup> Martin’s construction of Islam is not only revealing in and of itself (Martin’s narrative reinforced the notion that Islam encouraged, even rewarded, violence against Christians), but the fact that Martin’s interpretation differed so greatly from Velnet’s view of Islam, or lack thereof, is also very revealing. Martin’s account was essentially a retelling of Velnet’s narrative that was staged in Algiers rather than in Tripoli. Yet, despite the fact that Martin used many of Velnet’s plot lines and

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<sup>135</sup> N.a., *Mary Velnet*, 21.

<sup>136</sup> N.a., *Maria Martin*, 71.

descriptive paragraphs in her own work, she chose to add a religious discourse and opinion of Islam that was missing from Velnet's narrative. This suggests that not only did early Americans differ widely in their views of Islam, if they even had views at all (if many of the Barbary authors lacked a concrete view on Islam then one wonders how many everyday Americans would have had a defined view), but it also suggests that early Americans differed greatly in their views of religion in general. The lack of religious rhetoric and defined views on Islam in many of the Barbary works suggests that not all early Americans factored religion into their daily thoughts.

While religion may not have been an important factor to the author of *Mary Velnet*, it was very crucial to John Foss. In his preface to the public, Foss wrote, "The tears of sympathy will flow from the humane and feeling, at the tale of the hardships and suffering of their unfortunate countrymen, who had the misfortune to fall into the hands of the Algerines- whose tenderest mercies towards Christian captives, are the most extreme cruelties; and who are taught by the Religion of Mahomet (if that can be called a Religion which leads men to commission such horrid and bloody deeds) to persecute all its opposers."<sup>137</sup> Religion may not have been a crucial aspect in Velnet's pseudo-captivity—she was not an actual captive but her audiences almost assuredly took her to be one—but to Foss Islam was the driving force behind the harshness and cruelty of his captivity. Foss' time in Barbary was without a doubt a hardship filled with tremendous pain and suffering. Perhaps he was so shocked by his treatment that he sought a deeper reason behind why his Turkish captors could be so cruel. Or, perhaps he detested what he thought was a diabolical religion and externalized his

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<sup>137</sup> Foss, *Journal of John Foss, To the Public*.

sufferings onto it. There is no way of knowing why Foss believed what he wrote, but the more important point to make note of is the way in which the Barbary authors differed so greatly in their constructions of Islam and in their focus on religion in general.

### **The Barbary Pirates in Popular Culture**

Despite the overwhelming presence of the Turkish stereotypes in the widely read urban captivity narratives and the suggestive use of those stereotypes to create dramatic tension, one still wonders how well the American public understood those stereotypes or even had a solid idea of who or what the Algerine pirates were. The previous evidence would seem to suggest that by the early to mid-nineteenth century (as the urban and Saharan captivity tales were rolling off the printing presses in large numbers) the stereotypes were somewhat of common knowledge. Yet, there is considerable evidence to suggest that even as the first Barbary works considered here were produced (Markoe in 1787, Rowson in 1794, and Stevens in 1797) that the Barbary Coast Regencies and their inhabitants were a topic that Americans were quite familiar with. Following the capture of the *Maria* and the *Dauphin* in July of 1785, the French chargé d'affaires, Louis Guillaume Otto, who resided in New York, wrote to Thomas Jefferson that "The hostilities of the Barbarian corsairs have made a great sensation in America."<sup>138</sup> The sensation was evidently great enough that one of America's first poets, David Humphreys, wrote a poem in response to the seizure of

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<sup>138</sup> Julian P. Boyd et al., eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton, NJ, 1950- ), 9:176-77 quoted in, Lawrence A. Peskin, "The Lessons of Independence: How the Algerian Crisis Shaped Early American Identity," *Diplomatic History*, 28.3 (2004): 298.

the *Maria* and the *Dauphin*.<sup>139</sup> While Jefferson publicly disregarded the threat of the Barbary pirates, he evidently thought it was serious enough to prevent his own daughter from traveling. He told her uncle, Francis Eppes, that “unless you hear from myself...that peace is made with the Algerines, do not send her but in a vessel of French or English property; for these vessels alone are safe from prizes by the barbarians” Jefferson was so concerned about the possibility of his daughter being taken that, according to Lawrence Peskin, he repeated his instructions in two subsequent letters to Eppes.<sup>140</sup> (One wonders if the stereotypes of the sexually deviant and lustful Turk factored at all into Jefferson’s fears.)

In one more of the bizarre episodes of Barbary hysteria, three foreigners were arrested in Virginia in 1785 out of concern that they were “Algerine Spies.” The group had caused such a calamity that the governor of Virginia, Patrick Henry, involved himself in the arrest and interrogation. Unable to ascertain where the group had come from, the “Algerine Spies” were released.<sup>141</sup> The public reaction and subsequent rumors related to the Barbary pirates only intensified in 1786. In 1786 newspapers throughout the United States reported, at the very least, nine false Algerine ship seizures. In the same year there was a famous rumor that Benjamin Franklin had fallen captive to the Algerine Pirates as he returned home from Paris.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Osman, Bencherif, *The Image of Algeria in Anglo-American Writings 1785-1962* (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc, 1997), 45.

<sup>140</sup> *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 7:559, 9:91-92, 211-212 quoted in Peskin, “Lessons of Independence,” 299.

<sup>141</sup> Allison, *Crescent Obscured*, 3-5.

<sup>142</sup> Peskin, “Lessons of Independence,” 299-300.

Gary Wilson points out that on April 5, 7, and 13 the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, *Connecticut Gazette*, and *Maryland Gazette* all falsely reported that Algerines had been arrested in the United States for attempting to stab American citizens.<sup>143</sup> On March 6, 1786 the *Evening Gazette* printed a warning from Captain John Paul Jones which claimed that “the Algerines are cruising in different squadrons of six and eight sail, and extend themselves out as far as the western islands.” On May 1, 1786, the *Boston Gazette* reported that an English captain had spotted three Algerine vessels near Barbados that were on the “cruise for American vessels.”<sup>144</sup> Yet, as Peskin points out, there was no evidence to support such claims. In a 1788 essay, Hugh Williamson lobbied North Carolina to ratify the Constitution by asking, “What is there to prevent an Algerine pirate from landing on your coast, and carrying your citizens into slavery? You have not a single sloop of war.”<sup>145</sup>

The American public’s response to the return of a group of captives in 1797 highlights how American society had a certain fascination with the Barbary Coast and the captivity of their fellow countrymen. It is not clear from his writings if he was actually there, but in Stevens’ book he recounted the reception the captives received as they landed in Marcus Hook, Delaware and traveled in carriages to Philadelphia, the nation’s capital at the time:

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<sup>143</sup> Gary E. Wilson, “American Prisoners in the Barbary Nations, 1784-1816” (PhD diss., North Texas State University, 1979), 50.

<sup>144</sup> Peskin, “Lessons of Independence,” 300.

<sup>145</sup> Hugh Williamson, “Remarks on the New Plan of Government,” *Essays on the Constitution of the United States*. Ed. Paul L. Ford (Brooklyn, NY: Historical Printing Club, 1882), 403 quoted in Marr, *Algerine Spy*, XX.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 1797, they were brought to Philadelphia in carriages, escorted by many hundreds of their fellow countrymen who went out to meet them. Upon their arrival at the Indian Queen Tavern, the streets were so thronged as to render their passage difficult, and as they entered the house an ardent acclamation expressed the satisfaction of the people at their return.<sup>146</sup>

The overwhelmingly positive reaction the freed captives received agrees with Paul Baepler's conclusion that the Barbary conflict became "part of the American public spectacle: wax museums exhibited Barbary scenes, circuses held benefit performances for ransomed captives, [and] the 'machinery in transparency'—an early form of American film—projected Barbary displays."<sup>147</sup> The public spectacle of the Barbary conflict can be most clearly seen in the presentation of seven Tripolitan prisoners in March of 1805 in New York City theatres. The local theatres competed for the Tripolitans' attendance and advertisements in local newspapers read of "your real *bona fide* imported Turks." The Turks garnered such large crowds that on April 5 one theatre put an advertisement that read, "THE TURKS WILL VISIT THE THEATRE FOR POSITIVELY THE LAST TIME."<sup>148</sup>

What does this evidence amount to, one might ask. It shows that the Barbary literature's popularity in the early to mid-nineteenth century came in on the heels of the American public's fascination and anxiety over the Barbary States and the captivity of their countrymen. By the time that the urban captivity and Saharan captivity narratives were reaching bookshelves in large numbers, the American public

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<sup>146</sup> Stevens, *An Historical Account*, 93.

<sup>147</sup> Baepler, "Barbary Captivity Narrative in Early America," 220.

<sup>148</sup> Allison, *Crescent Obscured*, 33.

was already quite familiar with the Barbary conflict and understood who the inhabitants of the Barbary Coast were.

The urban captivity literature painted a nearly universal image of the Turk in which he or she was sexually deviant, lustful, unrestrained, violent and cruel (both inside and outside the sexual realm), and despotic. These displays were not just limited to a few odd pieces of literature, nor were they smaller irrelevant scenes in a much larger story. The scenes which constructed and reinforced the stereotypes of the archetypal Turk were prevalent throughout, and important parts of, one of the most popular forms of entertainment in early to mid-nineteenth century America. Yet, these works also revealed a great deal about the authors themselves and the society they came from. The divergence of opinion on Islam and the differing degrees to which religion in general was discussed in these works suggests that religion may not have been as important to some early Americans as the modern reader may have expected. Women were, by the time of Rowson's play, already reimagining their place in society and applying the American Revolution's rhetoric to their calls for their own liberation. It is important for the reader to keep these characteristics in mind as the specific stereotypes of the archetypal Arab are explored in the next chapter. It will become clear how the Barbary literature developed two distinct sets of stereotypes for Turks on the one hand and Arabs on the other, and how those distinctions were further reinforced by nineteenth century notions of race.



## Chapter 4

### SAHARAN CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES

The urban captivity works of Velnet, Danforth, Martin, and Rowson constructed and reinforced an archetypal Turk who was sexually deviant, inherently cruel, and despotic. The Saharan captivity narratives, on the other hand, built and reinforced an archetypal Arab who was distinct from, yet in some ways also similar to the Turk. The Arab, like the Turk, was a barbarian savage whose backwardness was astounding. In some ways, he even outdid the Turk: he was an animalistic, primal (possibly sub-human), mercilessly cruel, thieving, greedy, and hardy creature. But for all the Arab's wild and animalistic attributes, he (or she) was also a surprisingly charitable and humane being at times. Perhaps what most separated the archetypal Arabs of the Saharan captivity genre from the Turks of the urban captivity genre was the Arabs' lack of sexual deviance. The Arabs were never depicted committing or threatening the type of lurid acts the Turks were so often connected with. In further building a separate identity for the Arabs, the Saharan writers, in similar fashion to the Barbary commentators, often described the Arabs as olive or tawny-skinned figures in comparison to the fairer-skinned Turk. Additionally, the Arabs were often conflated with the Moors and both were generally imagined as lying somewhere in-between the American Indian (savage) and negro slave on the racial spectrum.

The urban captivity narratives, specifically *Mary Velnet* and *Maria Martin*, were undoubtedly very popular books for their time, but the Saharan captivity works rivaled, or may have even surpassed, their urban counterparts in readership. By far the

two most well-known Saharan captivity narratives were James Riley's 1817 publication, *An Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the American Brig Commerce*, and Archbald Robbins' 1817 work, *A Journal Comprising An Account of the Loss of the Brig Commerce of Hartford*. While the two titles resemble each other, one was not plagiarizing the other in the mold of Velnet and Martin. Both men were on board the *Commerce* (Riley was the ship's captain and Robbins was one of the crew) when it foundered on the coast of North Africa in late August of 1815. Riley and Robbins were held captive in the Sahara, redeemed by an Englishman, William Willshire, in the Empire of Morocco, and both men returned to the United States in 1816. Riley's narrative was published in at least nineteen editions between 1817 and 1859 in the United States, with another three editions released in Paris in 1818, Dordrecht in 1818, and London in 1871. Riley's narrative was so popular that the story was remade into a children's book that came out in eight editions between 1834 and 1876.<sup>149</sup> Robbins' account, on the other hand, was released in thirty-one editions from 1817 to 1851. The publishing company, "Hartford: Silas Andrus," released seventeen new editions between 1818 and 1828 alone.<sup>150</sup>

Riley and Robbins echoed many of the other Barbary writers by including explanations for why they wrote their narratives and assurances to the audience of their works' veracity. Riley claimed he was writing "to record in plain and unvarnished language, scenes in which [he] was a principal actor, of real and heart-

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<sup>149</sup> Paul Baepler, *White Slaves African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 307-08.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, 308-09.

appalling distresses.”<sup>151</sup> He hoped that his knowledge “might prove useful and interesting to the world, as well as peculiar[ly] instructive to [his] sea-faring brethren.”<sup>152</sup> Riley admitted that there was a potential to make money with the publication of such a tale, but he dismissed those concerns under the pretense that “with a view of being enabled by my labours to afford some relief to the surviving sufferers, and the destitute families of that part of my late crew, whose lot it was to perish in Africa, or who are still groaning out the little remains of their existence in slavery, have induced me to undertake the very arduous and difficult task of preparing and publishing a work so large.”<sup>153</sup> Riley further guaranteed his work’s authenticity to his audience by pointing out that throughout “the course of [his] life [he] visited and traveled through several foreign countries, [his] mind, was by no means unaccustomed to pay attention to, and make observations on whatever came within reach of [his] notice.”<sup>154</sup> Robbins, on the other hand, fully admitted that it was “affectation” to claim that he had “been influenced by motives wholly independent of personal emolument,”

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<sup>151</sup> James Riley, *An Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the American Brig Commerce, Wrecked on the Western Coast of Africa in the Month of August, 1815. With An Account of the Sufferings of the Surviving Officers and Crew Who Were Enslaved by the Wandering Arabs of the Great African Desert, or Zahahrah*. (New York: Merceins, 1817), III.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, IV.

but he assured his audience that in preparing his account he “aimed to be correct” and “to give a faithful and accurate detail of facts.”<sup>155</sup>

One cannot contend that Riley and Robbins were not actual Barbary captives, but it must be kept in mind that their narratives were edited and published by companies whose primary purpose was to turn a profit. (This leads one to wonder to what extent any number of the Barbary writers exaggerated their experiences to shape a better product.) The extent to which Riley and Robbins exaggerated their accounts, however, is in some ways an irrelevant question. The early American readers who encountered Riley’s or Robbins’ works had multiple reasons to view the narratives as retellings of factual events: the publishers of both works guaranteed the authenticity of the accounts, the authors explained why they were writing their narratives, Riley and Robbins declared that their works were authentic, and, in the case of Riley, letters from two character witnesses were attached to the preface which testified to his truthful character and the veracity of his narrative. These guarantees made Riley and Robbins ‘experts’ on the Sahara, a region which was still a relative blank space on the map.<sup>156</sup> This meant that their characterizations of the Arabs were not one of many constructions, but the leading and most important constructions.

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<sup>155</sup> Archbald Robbins, *A Journal Comprising An Account of the Loss of the Brig Commerce, of Hartford, (Con.) James Riley, Master, Upon the Western Coast of Africa, August 28, 1815; Also of the Slavery and Sufferings of the Author and the Rest of the Crew; Upon the Desert of Zahara, in the Years 1815, 1816, 1817; With Accounts of the Manners, Customs, and Habits of the Wandering Arabs* (Hartford: F.D. Bolles & Co, 1817), VI.

<sup>156</sup> The European image of Timbuktu, prior to Rene Caillié’s visit in 1828, as a city laden with gold highlights how little the Western world knew of the Sahara at the time Riley’s narrative was published. When Caillié arrived in Timbuktu he was shocked to find so little of the wealth and grandeur he, and the rest of the Western world, had

The other two Saharan captivity works that will be analyzed here were fictional narratives posing as fact. In a similar fashion to *Mary Velnet* and *Maria Martin*, these pseudo-factual Saharan works staged European women with whom American audiences could easily identify in seemingly truthful accounts.<sup>157</sup> Eliza Bradley's *An Authentic Narrative of the Shipwreck and Sufferings of Mrs. Eliza Bradley* came out in five editions in America between 1820 and 1823 and another two were released in Britain in 1824 and 1826. Khalid Bekkaoui states that by 1848 the book "went into at least twelve editions by seven different publishers in America and was used in many Sunday schools as a teaching text."<sup>158</sup> Another unknown author published a work titled, *Neapolitan Captive: Interesting Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Miss Viletta Laranda*. The only known publications of *Viletta Laranda* were in the United States in 1830 and 1831, but, according to Paul Baepler, those may have been the third and fourth editions (indicating that there were potentially two earlier editions of Laranda's narrative).<sup>159</sup>

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imagined would be there. For more information on the myth of Timbuktu see Richard L. Smith, "The Image of Timbuktu In Europe Before Caillié," *Proceedings of the Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society*, edited by E.P. Fitzgerald, 1982.

<sup>157</sup> Any work which was a fictional narrative posing as fact will henceforth be referred to as pseudo-factual.

<sup>158</sup> Khalid Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives: Narratives of Enslavement, 1735-1830* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 206.

<sup>159</sup> It should be noted by the reader that these dates of publication and edition numbers are not entirely perfect and should not be taken as a complete history on the publication of Saharan shipwreck captivity novels in the United States. Instead, they offer the reader some, albeit limited, evidence indicative of just how popular the Barbary theme, and the Saharan captivity novels specifically, were.

Paralleling the pseudo-factual urban captivity works, the contemporary Saharan narratives generally included the details of the protagonist's life and provided an explanation for why the protagonist was traveling. Written in the first person, Bradley's narrative gave a quick overview of her life. "I was born in Liverpool, Eng., of creditable parents, in the year 1783—in the year 1802, at the age of 19, I was married to Capt. James Bradley, my present husband."<sup>160</sup> Bradley was traveling because her husband "insisted on [her] accompanying him" since Bradley had gone with him "on a former voyage to Madeira."<sup>161</sup> Laranda's readers, on the other hand, were told that she was "by birth a Neapolitan, and a native of the City of Naples," who in "September 1829 took passage with [her] brother on board of a Neapolitan brig, bound to Gibraltar."<sup>162</sup> These details served to give these fictional works a definite air of authenticity. American readers would have had no reason not to take Bradley's or Laranda's descriptions of the Arabs any less seriously than those made by Riley and Robbins. The facade of veracity in Laranda's narrative, however, went a step further than Bradley's. Her account was prefaced with, and followed by, a letter from the French army officer who supposedly redeemed Laranda. In the letter, the officer explained the circumstances by which he found Laranda and testified that he was "afford[ed] an indelible proof that she [had] not exaggerated," due to her "emaciated

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<sup>160</sup> N.a., "An Authentic Narrative of the Shipwreck and Sufferings of Mrs. Eliza Bradley," in Baepler, *White Slaves*, 249.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> N.a., "Neapolitan Captive: Interesting Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Viletta Laranda," in Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives*, 245.

appearance as well as the crimsoned marks of the lash upon her back and shoulders.”<sup>163</sup>

There is one more point worth making regarding the Saharan captivity works before analyzing the specific stereotypical constructions of the Arabs. Just as the Barbary commentators and the urban captivity writers showed a propensity to plagiarize each other, so too did the Saharan captivity writers. Khalid Bekkaoui and Paul Baepler both noted that Bradley’s narrative borrowed heavily from Riley’s account.<sup>164</sup> From the actual descriptions of the Arabs, to the specific sequence of events that the protagonist experiences, Bradley’s narrative was in some ways a condensed version of Riley’s account that staged a female instead of a male protagonist. The plagiarism extended beyond basic plot outlines or small sentence fragments. Much in the manner of the previous works discussed, large paragraphs were taken nearly verbatim from Riley’s work and inserted into Bradley’s ‘authentic narrative.’ The tendency the Barbary writers have shown throughout all three genres to heavily plagiarize each other provides additional evidence to support the belief that the stereotypical constructions that one can find in any one specific work of any of three genres of Barbary writing were almost certainly not limited to that specific work.

### **Wild and Savage Arabs**

The Saharan captivity narratives constructed the Arab as a wild, savage, and primordial being primarily through the use of animalistic imagery and descriptions. Intertwined with the Arab’s animalistic and wild nature was his merciless cruelty.

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 255.

<sup>164</sup> Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives*, 207. Baepler, *White Slaves*, 247.

While the Arab was not continually depicted torturing his (or her) captives in either the ‘factual’ or pseudo-factual accounts in the manner that the Turk was, the Arab could become quickly enraged. When the Arab’s anger was triggered and his cruelty was expressed his appearance resembled more a beast than a human. Riley’s first encounter with an Arab occurred shortly after the *Commerce* shipwrecked off the coast of North Africa. The crew gathered what provisions they could, safely swam to shore, and established a small campsite. Riley, however, noticed a group of Arabs approaching the campsite and he took note of the appearance of the man leading them:

His hair was long and bushy, resembling a pitch mop...his face resembled that of an ourang-outang more than a human being; his eyes were red and fiery...and a long curling beard, which depended from his upper lip and chin down upon his breast, gave him altogether a most horrid appearance, and I could not but imagine that those well set teeth were sharpened for the purpose of devouring human flesh!!<sup>165</sup>

The “ourang-outang” face, red fiery eyes, and long bushy hair built an understanding of Arabs as more creature than man for Riley’s audience. Riley’s initial fear that the Arabs he encountered were cannibals hinted at what may have been a preconceived notion that Americans believed of Arabs at the turn of the nineteenth century. Riley was not unique in his belief either. After Robbins saw the same group of Arabs for the first time he revealed to the audience that he believed the crew was in “momentary danger of being devoured by demons, whose diabolical ferocity would have added a laurel to the escutcheon of Satan himself.”<sup>166</sup> Ignoring for a moment the fact that Eliza Bradley’s work was in many ways a plagiarized version of Riley’s *Authentic*

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<sup>165</sup> Riley, *Authentic Narrative*, 21.

<sup>166</sup> Robbins, *Journal of Loss*, 27.



*Narrative*, it too employed the concept of the cannibalistic Arab at the beginning of the narrative. Bradley and the surviving crew of the *Sally* prostrated “themselves at the feet of the Arabs as a token of submission. This they did not, however, seem to regard.” The Arabs, Bradley recalled, “seized us with all the ferocity of cannibals, [and] they in an instant stripped us almost naked.”<sup>167</sup> Laranda’s narrative initially built a very similar understanding of the Arabs. “[The] Bedowens, who were esteemed the worst class of Arabs, and from whom we had no reason to expect much mercy,” seized all of the crew “with the ferocity of cannibals.”<sup>168</sup>

Despite Riley’s and Robbins’ initial fears of being devoured and Bradley’s and Laranda’s first likening of the Arabs to cannibals, the cannibal theme never appeared again in any of these four narratives, which is especially telling when one considers the fact that Riley’s and Robbins’ narratives were five-hundred-fifty-four and two-hundred-fifty-eight pages long respectively. These initial passages suggest Americans may have very well believed that the wandering Arabs of the desert were cannibals. Riley and Robbins actually shipwrecked on the Barbary Coast and both men may have very well feared that not only their lives, but their human flesh was in danger. Yet, since these initial fears of cannibalism were never realized for any of the Saharan captives (not even for the pseudo-factual victims where the authors could have presumably written whatever they wanted) it seems likely that these works may have

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<sup>167</sup> N.a., *Eliza Bradley*, in Baepler, *White Slaves*, 255.

<sup>168</sup> N.a., *Viletta Laranda*, in Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives*, 245.

actually worked to undo any beliefs early Americans had of the Arabs of the Zahara as cannibals.<sup>169</sup>

Despite never referencing the cannibalistic theme again, the animalistic imagery that accompanied Riley's first description of an Arab remained a constant theme in all four works. Riley later commented on the previously described Arab man's wives. Riley noted that while they were "a little less frightful," their teeth "stuck out like hogs' tusks, and their tanned skins hung in loose plaits on their faces and breasts."<sup>170</sup> Robbins too employed descriptions and imagery which seemed to question the humanity of the Arab. He noted:

The gnashing teeth and opened mouth of the old man, stretching almost from ear to ear—his long grey beard hanging on his breast—his head covered with long bushy hair, standing in every direction—the red and flashing eyes of the old women, their tusks projecting from their jaws—and the more mild though terrible appearance of their ferocious brood, imparted feeling to us, better imagined than described.<sup>171</sup>

The gnashing teeth, red flashing eyes, bushy hair projecting out in all direction, and use of the word 'brood,' constructed the Arab as something not entirely human. They were certainly not creatures equal to Riley or Robbins. Bradley's narrative often employed animalistic comparisons when she described the actions of Arab captors. As she was first taken captive she recounted that "As soon as the Arabs finished

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<sup>169</sup> Zahara was the spelling used by the commentators in the nineteenth century and will be employed here, at times, to emphasize how the writers projected whatever image they wanted onto the Sahara, which made the *Zahara* a sort of imaginative world.

<sup>170</sup> Riley, *Authentic Narrative*, 21.

<sup>171</sup> Robbins, *Journal of Loss*, 26.

stripping us, a warm contest arose among themselves, each claiming us individually as his property. This contest lasted for more than an hour, nor could I compare the combatants to anything but hungry wolves contending for their prey!”<sup>172</sup>

The animalistic language definitely implied that the Arabs were something less than human to Riley’s, Robbins, and Bradley’s audiences, but the authors also had no problem openly suggesting that the Arabs were either a degraded form of man or were simply not human. Robbins told his audience that he was forced to travel “with men as wild and as ferocious as the tigers or leopards that prowl over them,” and those very same Arabs were, according to Robbins, and understood by his audience to be “[The] most merciless of creatures that wear the form of man.”<sup>173</sup> In a parallel to many of the Barbary commentators’ beliefs regarding the despotism of the Turks, Robbins constructed the Arabs as “the most unfeeling, debased, and degraded race of creatures on Earth.”<sup>174</sup> Robbins was not entirely sure if the Arabs could “be called human,” since their “appearance [was] nothing but a slander upon our species.” Robbins not only built an understanding for his readers that the Arabs were a slander upon the human race, but they were the most degraded race of, not men, but creatures who walked the earth.

Riley continued to employ the animalistic descriptions, imagery, and comparisons for his captors which also allowed him to openly question their humanity. Riley went through a series of masters throughout his narrative, but an Arab by the

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<sup>172</sup> N.a., *Eliza Bradley*, in Baepler, *White Slaves*, 255.

<sup>173</sup> Robbins, *Journal of Loss*, 91, 57.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, 109.

name of Sidi Hamet was the man who eventually led him to Morocco and ransomed him to a British trader and Consul. At one point in the narrative, Riley and two of his crew—Mr. Savage and Horace—were traveling north with Sidi Hamet and his brother Seid. As the group neared exhaustion Seid ordered the men to stop. Sidi Hamet, however, called for them to push on, which resulted in Seid seizing Mr. Savage and Horace. At that moment Sidi Hamet’s “wrath was kindled” and like a wild Arab he:

Leaped from his camel, and darting like lightning up to Seid, laid hold of him, and disengaged Mr. Savage and Horace from his grasp. They clinched each other like *lions*, and with fury in their looks, each strove to throw the other to the ground...they writhed and twined in every shape until both fell, but Sidi Hamet was undermost: *fire seemed to flash from their eyes*, whilst they twisted around each other like a couple of *serpents*.<sup>175</sup>

The Arabs were continually compared to and imagined as wild animals with red flashing or fiery eyes. At an earlier point in the account, Riley recounted a dispute between Sidi Hamet and another Arab, Hamat. As Hamat became angry his eyes, according to Riley, “seemed to flash fire.”<sup>176</sup> And yet again, “The eyes of these fellows seemed to flash fire at the preference we enjoyed [Sidi Hamet had given Riley and his crew a piece of honey-comb but had not offered the Arabs from another caravan any]; and we dreaded the effects of their malicious envy; for the Arabs set no bounds to their anger and resentment.”<sup>177</sup> These “savage Arabs,” “merciless ruffians,”

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<sup>175</sup> Riley, *Authentic Narrative*, 197, emphasis added.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, 112.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, 175.

and “ferocious savages” were, in the understanding Riley built for his audience, “merciless beings in human form.”<sup>178</sup>

Bradley’s narrative, much in the manner of the canon of thought its predecessors helped to forge, constructed and reinforced a similar image of the bestial Arab. The ways in which Bradley’s description of her Arab ‘master’ (she was not an actual captive) paralleled those of Riley and Robbins also shows how her work was in many ways a plagiarized version of the previous two. Bradley’s master was:

More savage and frightful in his appearance, than any of the rest...his hair was stout and bushy, and stuck up in every direction like bristles upon the back of a hog; his eyes were small but were red and fiery, resembling those of a serpent when irritated; and to add to his horrid appearance, his beard (which was of jet black and curly) was of more than a foot in length!—such, I assure the reader, is a true description.<sup>179</sup>

Bradley later recalled when the Arabs in her caravan devoured half a camel like “ravenous wolves.”<sup>180</sup> And in a final parallel to Riley and Robbins, Bradley reinforced for her readers the understanding that the Arabs were not entirely human, they were rather “Monster[s] in human shape.”<sup>181</sup>

The constructions of the Arabs that were built with the animalistic descriptions, imagery, and comparisons extended beyond their savage and sub-human or degraded human form. The Saharan captivity writers also emphasized the merciless nature and cruel treatment they suffered at the hands of their captors. Robbins recalled

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid, 63, 38, 40, and 73.

<sup>179</sup> N.a., *Eliza Bradley*, in Baepler, *White Slaves*, 256.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 261.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 256.

to his audience how his “Unfeeling master’s...capricious exercise of power,” resulted in the most “direful cruelty [that] would make even a tiger weep.”<sup>182</sup> Riley reminisced over how he escaped the clutches of his first would-be captors, but noted that “One of [his] unfortunate companions was sacrificed to glut the brutal ferocity of the natives.”<sup>183</sup> Earlier, Riley recalled how his Arab masters were “much amused in observing our difficulties in ascending the height [of a sand dune], and kept up a laugh while they were whipping us forward.”<sup>184</sup> Bradley’s male companions also suffered the wrath of their Arab masters. They communicated to the Arabs that they were too tired to continue the trek across the desert—Bradley had been allowed to ride a camel—but “The unmerciful Arabs thereupon became greatly enraged and beat those who had complained of their weakness most unmercifully.”<sup>185</sup>

Riley and Robbins certainly did suffer at the hands of their Arab captors, and had Bradley’s narrative been based on actual captives the men in her company and presumably Bradley herself would have suffered the stick of their Arab captors at least occasionally. Yet, the reason Riley gave to explain to his audience why he did not suffer more was not because his value as a slave only existed if he was alive, but as the result of heavenly intercession. Riley told his audience that it was the “ever merciful God of the universe who had conducted us through so many dreadful scenes of danger and suffering; had controlled the passions and disposed the hearts of the barbarous

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<sup>182</sup> Robbins, *Journal of Loss*, 65.

<sup>183</sup> Riley, *Authentic Narrative*, 379.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid*, 73.

<sup>185</sup> N.a, *Eliza Bradley*, in Baepler, *White Slaves*, 260.

Arabs in our favour.”<sup>186</sup> Bradley’s narrative offered up the same conclusion to its readers verbatim.<sup>187</sup> The passage not only confirms that *Eliza Bradley* plagiarized heavily from Riley’s *Authentic Narrative*, but shows that while the Saharan captivity works did not depict the Arabs continually committing violent and cruel acts in the way that the urban captivity works portrayed the Turks, the audience was given an explanation as to why the captives were not more harshly treated. It was not that the Arabs were constructed as any less harsh, cruel, or savage than the Turks, but it was because of the intercession of God that Bradley and Riley were treated better than Velnet and Martin, or so early American readers were told.

### **The Thieving Arab**

The Barbary commentators often remarked that the Arabs and the Moors were ‘addicted’ to or had a propensity for thieving and the Saharan captivity writers continued to build on that stereotype. When the *Commerce* first struck the rocks off the coast of North Africa, Captain Riley had the crew take as much of the \$2000 of specie he had in his personal trunk as they could carry. Robbins, however, declined, telling his readers, “I had already more of my own [specie] than I could thus hide from the eye of an Arab.”<sup>188</sup> Because this passage was located at the very beginning of the narrative, it suggests that American audiences may have already been familiar with the concept of the thieving Arab by 1817. Robbins later went on to state that “Thieving

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<sup>186</sup> Riley, *Authentic Narrative*, 297.

<sup>187</sup> N.a, *Eliza Bradley*, Baepler, *White Slaves*, 280.

<sup>188</sup> Robbins, *Journal of Loss*, 25.

[is] a vice to which they are *all* addicted.” The original quotation, however, needed the audience to have already understood that Arabs were “*all* addicted” to thieving.<sup>189</sup> While his readers could have easily figured out what he was insinuating in the opening passage, it seems more likely he was evoking an already understood stereotype rather than being coy with his audience.

Riley’s narrative similarly constructed the Arabs of the Zahara as thieves, but in some ways, Riley went a step further by emphasizing the inherent greed of the Arabs. In the beginning of the account, Riley was briefly held hostage by the first Arabs the crew of the *Commerce* encountered (the ones they had thought to be cannibals). As the crew watched helplessly, Riley told his audience that he believed he had no possible means of escape until he thought “to tempt their avarice.”<sup>190</sup> Upon entering the dominion of the Emperor of Morocco, Riley was pleased to be free of the “rapacious Arabs” of the Zahara.<sup>191</sup> Riley’s last master, Sidi Hamet, while a “wandering wretch,” was, in Riley’s words, a “thievish Arab.”<sup>192</sup> It was not just the individual Arabs that Riley met that were characterized as greedy thieves, but the Arabs as a whole. Riley remarked that “The Arab is high-spirited, brave, avaricious, rapacious, and revengeful.”<sup>193</sup> The wives and daughters of the Arab men also,

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid, 183. Emphasis in original.

<sup>190</sup> Riley, *Authentic Narrative*, 35.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 245.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, 307.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, 370.



according to Riley, took “every opportunity to deceive or steal from [their husbands and fathers].”<sup>194</sup>

Laranda’s narrative utilized and reinforced this stereotype as well. With the pretense of having been an actual captive to the Arabs, Laranda noted that her captors, “The Barbarous monsters,” as she referred to them, had an “insatiable thirst for gold.” The Arabs as a whole, she told her audience, “hold it as a ruling principle, that might is right, and that no one has a right to possess property any longer than he has power to defend it.”<sup>195</sup> With her supposed firsthand experience in the captivity of the Arabs, Bradley claimed that “For as they live by stealing, they conceive that property belongs to no one, unless he has the power to defend it.”<sup>196</sup> Bradley’s explanation of the thieving Arab, however, took on a slightly different character. Rather than being the criminally addicted Arabs of Robbins’, Carey’s, Shaler’s, and Stevens’ writings or the rapacious and avaricious Arabs of Laranda and Riley, the Arabs, in Bradley’s construction, lived by stealing. While Bradley’s interpretation was not exactly flattering, it seems to more accurately reflect, to a certain degree, what the actual role of thievery was in the lives of the nomadic Arabs who lived in the daunting climate of the Sahara where provisions were constantly near exhaustion (Riley and Robbins both often made mention of their caravans’ water and food supply running dangerously low throughout their journeys). Yet, despite Bradley’s slightly differing construction, the strong majority of the writers who discussed the Arabs, both the Saharan captivity

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid, 361.

<sup>195</sup> N.a, *Viletta Laranda*, in Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives*, 254, 247, and 250.

<sup>196</sup> Na., *Eliza Bradley*, in Baepler, *White Slaves*, 263.

writers and the Barbary commentators, nearly universally built and reinforced the stereotype of the greedy, thieving, and criminally addicted Arab for their early American audiences.

### **The Hospitable Arab**

However hard one looks in the urban captivity narratives, one may never find a positive depiction of the Turks; yet, one does not have to search the Saharan captivity accounts very long before positive images of the Arabs begin to surface. While the Arab archetype was composed primarily of negative stereotypes, it also contained a number of contrasting portrayals in which the Arabs were not only hospitable and charitable to each other, but to the captives as well. Furthermore, these depictions were not only present in the narratives of the actual Barbary captives (Riley and Robbins), but they were also present in Bradley's pseudo-factual narrative. The fact that these positive scenes existed in Bradley's work is especially telling when one considers that the author could have chosen to write whatever he or she pleased of the Arabs. And it is even more surprising if one recalls that it was within pseudo-factual urban captivity works where the stereotypical constructions of the Turk were mostly strongly developed.

Of all the Saharan captivity writers, it was perhaps Riley who presented the most split view of the Arabs between these dueling stereotypes. Riley often employed animalistic language and referred to the Arabs as "savages," "merciless ruffians," or any number of other words synonymous with "barbarian," but he also told his audience that "A standard maxim among the Arabs [was] to feed the hungry if in their power, and give them drink, even if the owner of the provisions [had] to rob himself

and his own family to do it.”<sup>197</sup> Riley even noted that his Arab masters, “Seemed very sorry [that] it was not in their power to give [him and his crew] some food.”<sup>198</sup> The charitable nature the Arabs showed to not only their fellow kinsmen but to Riley and his crew astounded him: “On the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October, our masters took leave of this hospitable tribe of Arabs, who not only fed *them*, but seemed desirous that *we, their slaves*, should have sufficient nourishment also, and gave us liberally of the best they had.”<sup>199</sup> Riley’s narrative not only constructed the Arabs as surprisingly charitable at times, but Riley recounted an episode where his Arab master, Sidi Hamet, displayed noticeably human qualities rather than fiery red eyes and serpent-like movements. Recalling his first encounter with Sidi Hamet, Riley wrote, “For although he [knew] no language but the Arabic, he comprehended so well what I wished to communicate, that he actually shed tears at the recital of my distresses, notwithstanding that, among the Arabs, weeping is regarded as a womanish weakness.”<sup>200</sup> Riley may have very well been exaggerating Sidi Hamet’s emotional response to his story in an attempt to generate more of an emotional response from his own audience. But Sidi Hamet’s actual reaction to Riley’s story is irrelevant. Riley, under numerous assurances of accuracy, told his audience of this encounter which humanized, to a degree, his Arab captor. The competing nature of these characterizations was not lost on Riley himself. When Riley wrote of the “high-

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<sup>197</sup> Riley, *Authentic Narrative*, 110.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, 68.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid*, 133, Emphasis in original.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid*, 103.

spirited, brave, avaricious, rapacious, and revengeful” Arab he concluded his thought by stating that “strange as it may appear, [the Arab] is at the same time hospitable and compassionate.”<sup>201</sup>

Even Robbins, who spent considerable time discussing “how stupidly ignorant this barbarous race of beings [was]” and often spoke of “the stupid conduct and beastly manners of the wretches with whom [he] was compelled to associate,”<sup>202</sup> acknowledged that the “stupid” and “unthinking” creatures were quite capable of displaying moments of humanity and generous behavior. Robbins noted that the Arabs, “Always treat[ed] their visitors with what they [had]” and “If it is known that a camel has been slain, and the owner conceals the meat, or declines to impart a portion, the highest indignation is excited.”<sup>203</sup> Despite Robbins’ constructions of the Arabs’ savage, wild, sub-human, and greedy nature he also built an understanding of Arab society for his American readers in which selfishness was frowned upon and charity-giving was encouraged.

Bradley’s narrative may have even surpassed Riley’s in presenting a split image of the Arab. While there is no way to know for sure why the author included these positive depictions when she did not have to, it seems likely that it was done to follow the mold laid down by Riley and Robbins in an attempt to keep the account’s air of authenticity. In this regard, it appears that the Arab’s construction as an occasionally charitable and kind being was something that was to almost be expected

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid, 370.

<sup>202</sup> Robbins, *Journal of Loss*, 85, 87.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid, 130.

by the audience. In Bradley's narrative, the author made numerous references to the fact that her masters allowed her to ride a camel while the rest of the captives were forced to walk barefoot across the desert.<sup>204</sup> Throughout much of her experience in captivity, Bradley was continually granted special treatment by her Arab captors: "my master ordered me to dismount, and after he...presented me with about half a pint of water, and a handful more of the insects [to eat]! After which, I was permitted to lie down in the tent, to repose for the night; this was an indulgence that was not allowed the other captives."<sup>205</sup> Bradley's companions, "were beat unmercifully by their masters," and "by ill treatment as well as hunger, reduced to mere skeletons," with "their whole bodies burned quite black by the powerful rays of the sun." By contrast, Bradley, "blessed be God, suffered little but from hunger and thirst."<sup>206</sup> Bradley's treatment reached a sort of climax when her master gave her a Bible that was recovered from the shipwreck and dedicated a space for her in their campsite to read the gospel. When Bradley was insulted and spit on by her master's fellow Arabs, the master "became greatly enraged and beat the vile authors" of her tears.<sup>207</sup>

Bradley certainly constructed and reinforced the conflicting stereotypes as Riley and Robbins did, but the conflict was much more complicated in Bradley's narrative. Riley's mention of the intercession of God came nearly three hundred pages into his five-hundred-fifty-four page chronicle. That statement was also followed by a

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<sup>204</sup> N.a, *Eliza Bradley*, in Baepler, *White Slaves*, 256.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid*, 257.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid*, 269.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid*, 271.

number of favorable declarations regarding Sidi Hamet that were made by Riley after his redemption. In many ways this lessened the role of divine intervention in Riley's account and, in turn, Riley's work seems to have created for its American audience two true yet opposing stereotypes: one in which the Arab was kind and friendly and the other in which he was a savage monster. Bradley's narrative, however, was much shorter, used significantly more religious language, and Bradley was the only benefactor of the Arab's hospitality in her account. These factors gave her statement about the role of divine intervention considerably more force for her American readers. So while her work contained the strongest scenes of Arab hospitality, the Arab's positive actions were not the result of his inherent kindness and humane nature, but were the result of divine intervention.

Unlike in Riley's, Robbins', and Bradley's accounts, the scenes of the humane and charitable nomadic Arab never emerged to challenge the constructions of the savage and greedy desert wanderer in Laranda's narrative. Instead, two scenes more familiar to the urban captivity works emerged in Laranda's account. In the beginning of her account Laranda recalled that once asleep she would often "image myself surrounded by a cluster of barbarous monsters, preparing to commit that violence upon my person that they had not yet attempted!"<sup>208</sup> The "violence" that Laranda spoke of was, in fact, never committed upon her person, but there was one scene in which she was tortured by her Arab captors. Towards the end of her narrative, Laranda was being tormented by the children of her captors who were striking her with a wooden board. Laranda lashed out against the children, snatched the board, and stomped on it in the sand. The board, however, had Qur'anic verses inscribed on it, and for this act

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<sup>208</sup> Na., *Viletta Laranda*, in Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives*, 248.

Laranda was punished to “appease the Prophet’s anger.” Laranda recalled that her captors:

Placed [her], (stripped naked to my waste) upon the back of a Dromedary, and there secured, with my back toward the head of the beast, which was to be led three or four times circuitously around the tents, while in the meantime I was doomed to receive a severe flagellation from an Arab selected for that purpose, which was to be inflicted with a bunch of rods on my naked back...there was not a space of the width of my finger of my back and shoulders that was not mangled in a manner too shocking to describe, and my back rendered a complete gore of blood from my shoulders to my hips.<sup>209</sup>

The violence of this scene, however, did not create a sense of implied rape in the manner of Velnet or Martin. Laranda was not fully stripped (only her back was exposed) and the violence was kept above her waist (it was her back and shoulders that were “mangled”).

### **Hardy, Enduring Arabs**

Of all the ways in which the Saharan captivity narratives stereotypically constructed the Arab for early American audiences, the most plausible was perhaps the perception that the narratives reinforced that the Arabs of the Zahara were a hardy, robust people. Riley and Bradley both wrote, in varying degrees, of the toughness and enduring nature the Arabs showed to be able to survive in the desert. In some ways, Riley seemed to admire, or at the very least respect the Arabs’ abilities to live in such harsh conditions. Yet, as with many of the stereotypical constructions that made up the archetypal Arab, the understanding of Arabs’ robustness was not altogether a positive depiction. In Riley’s work, the Arabs were constructed as a sort of enduring

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid, 251.

people who never got sick or tired and lived for an incredibly long time. Riley thought that the Arabs could “endure hunger, thirst, hardships, and fatigues better than any other people under heaven.”<sup>210</sup> While Riley was “barebone[d] and mangled” from riding “one hundred and five miles” in one day, Sidi Hamet and his two companions “thought nothing of it” and did not even “appear to be fatigued.”<sup>211</sup> Riley was “fully of [the] opinion, that hundreds and thousands of Arabs on this vast expanse of desert, actually live to the age of two hundred years of our calendar.”<sup>212</sup> Bradley’s narrative similarly constructed a view of the robust Arab, though her construction did not contain the enduring trope of Riley’s account. Bradley noticed how her masters were “accustomed to such hardships,” and “did not even complain of fatigue.”<sup>213</sup> The Arab women, however, were, in Bradley’s construction, “created expressly for the country which they inhabit, as no human beings can endure thirst, hunger, and fatigues better than they.”<sup>214</sup> The reason why Bradley’s narrative included the construction of the robust Arab when Robbins’ and Laranda’s did not seems to be the result of the fact that Bradley’s work primarily plagiarized and borrowed from Riley’s narrative.

The mixed bag that these four captivity narratives presented of the robust Arab seems to indicate that of all the stereotypes associated with the archetypal Arab—savage, primal, sub-human in nature, greedy, and criminal—American audiences may

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<sup>210</sup> Riley, *Authentic Narrative*, 367.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*, 119.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid*, 376.

<sup>213</sup> N.a, *Eliza Bradley*, in Baepler, *White Slaves*, 263.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid*, 275.



have been least familiar with the concept of the hardy Arab. While Laranda's and Robbins' narratives lacked the hardy and robust trope, it seems likely that the early American readers of their narratives could have easily reached the same conclusion as Riley and Bradley of the Arabs independently. This appears even more probable if the early American reader was closer to the frontier where they may have thought of themselves as robust and may have seen some of their own qualities—toughness and resourcefulness—in the nomadic Arabs who somehow managed to survive in the Zahara.

The hardy and robust trope of Riley's and Bradley's writings also reveals something about the way in which early Americans viewed the Zahara in the nineteenth century. One has a difficult time conceptualizing where exactly much of these narratives took place. After Riley and Robbins fled their initial encounter with the Arabs in the *Commerce's* surviving longboat, they sailed south, and once their supplies were exhausted they continued to march south overland. After they were taken captive by another group of Arabs their location and direction was even more ambiguous. The Arabs covered nearly absurd distances every day (Riley and Robbins both believed that they were traveling upwards of one hundred to one hundred and fifty miles a day); yet, they seemed to be just going from watering hole to watering hole with no definite purpose. One gets very little sense of where the captives were going or why they were going there in any of the four accounts. Even as Riley went north towards Morocco with Sidi Hamet one gets next to no sense of geography until they approach towns in the Southeast of present day Morocco. The Sahara was, even by the early nineteenth century, still a relatively uncharted region of the world. And it seems that for these early American writers, and readers, this blank area on the map

was a sort of blank screen onto which they could project whatever image they wanted. The Arabs were not the despotic Turks who ruined Barbary, but a race of beings who seemed to have changed little since the dawn of time. If America was creating a new type of government and society, one which had never been seen before in the world (or so some early Americans believed), then Americans were truly the world's modern beings. Yet, as their Western world was rapidly changing, early American writers projected an image of the Arabs as primordial; they were part of the eternal landscape of the Sahara. While the West continued to improve and the Barbary States continued to collapse under Turkish despotism, the Arabs would still be going back and forth between their watering holes as they had since the dawn of time. The Arabs were, in essence, the *Zahara*.

### **Islam**

The Saharan captivity writers, despite their very similar stereotypical constructions of the archetypal Arab, built a much more varied spectrum of opinions and perceptions of Islam for their American readers. On one end of the spectrum was Riley, whose narrative largely ignored the topic of Islam. He made passing references to the caravans stopping at certain times so that the Arabs could pray, but he stated it very matter-of-factly and said little else. Whenever there was an opportunity for Riley to make a comment on or characterization of the religious practices he observed, Riley passed on it. When one considers that Riley often took every opportunity to remind his readers of the savage nature of his captors and his own sufferings, his lack of comments on Islam appears even more surprising. Perhaps he took no quarrel with Islam and did not believe his sufferings were inspired by Islam as John Foss did. Whatever the reason, Riley's narrative would not have led early American readers to

form any sort of opinion on the religion outside of what they already understood and believed.

Robbins, on the other hand, fell much more in line with Foss: his attacks on Islam were relentless and he felt that it was Islam itself which led humans towards violence and savagery. At an early point in his narrative, Robbins compared, for his readers, the values that he believed Christianity espoused against the behavior that Islam inspired. The passage is long, but worth quoting in full:

It is almost impossible in this place, to avoid remarking upon the different effect that the two systems introduced into our world by our divine Redeemer, and the impostor Mahommed, has upon the professors of these different systems. The religion introduced by the one teaches ‘Peace on earth, and good will to men. To do to others as you would have others do to you.’ It teaches men to check the operations of passion, and depraved nature, and to become pure in heart. That of the other promises the full gratification of every propensity. His paradise is a region of gluttony, drunkenness, and debauchery. The one teaches men to love their enemies—the other to destroy them. The one teaches us, ‘to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked,’—the other, to tear from the unfortunate being in their power the last piece of raiment that guards him from the inclemency of the seasons, and to see, with perfect indifference, the famished slave die at their feet.<sup>215</sup>

In Robbins’ words Christianity was the religion of giving, kindness, and self restraint; whereas Islam inspired its followers to seek gratification for their every desire (it appears that Robbins attributed the wild nature of the Arab to his faith) and in a direct parallel to many twenty-first century writers, Islam, he believed, inspired violence against its enemies. It taught its followers to be cruel (allowing the famished slave to die at one’s feet) and above all, it inspired violence against Christians (the division

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<sup>215</sup> Robbins, *Journal of Loss*, 81-82.

Robbins' made between followers of the divine Redeemer and professors of the "imposter Mahommed" suggests that in his reference to the enemies of Muslims he was referring to Christians).

Robbins continued to craft an understanding of Islam for his readers in which Islam required violence and inspired savagery among its followers. In a campsite, Robbins observed large groups of Arabs praying four times a day, and in watching the daily processions of his captors he remarked that "I was a *kellup en-sahrau* [A Christian]—and to slay me, might be thought as offering an acceptable sacrifice to Mahommed."<sup>216</sup> Robbins, towards the end of his narrative, made one more remark on Islam, this time in reference to the Moors. The Moors, in Robbins opinion, were "better educated than the wandering Arabs," and they were more "refined in their manners," but the Moors still "manifest[ed] the ferocious nature, and vindictive spirit, common to all the descendants of *Ishmael*."<sup>217</sup> Robbins' final statement fashioned a view of Islam for his readers in which the stereotypical constructions and characterizations his narrative made of the Arabs, and to an extent the Moors, were not necessarily limited to just those two groups. They were flaws that were present within all Muslims (descendants of Ishmael) because it was Islam that engendered it in them.

Bradley's *Narrative of Shipwreck* occupied an odd place on the spectrum of conclusions that were drawn of Islam by the Barbary Coast writers. Bradley fell in line with the overarching negative view towards Islam of Robbins, Foss, Shaler,

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid, 182.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid, 200, Emphasis in original.

Markoe, and Rowson. In Bradley's construction of religion, similarly to Robbins, Islam was pitted directly against Christianity. Yet, she went a step further by insinuating that Islam was anathema to the Christian religion. After receiving a copy of the Bible from her Arab master, Bradley remarked, "My feelings on receiving so rich a present from the hands of one whose very nature was at enmity with our Christian religion, may be perhaps perceived, but I cannot attempt to describe them." In her reference to her master's "nature," Bradley could have been referring to his ethnic Arab character, rather than his religion, but she continued:

To form a correct idea of my emotions, at that time, let him, and him alone, who has full faith in the religion of Christ...transport himself in imagination to the country where I then was; a distant heathen clime, a land of darkness, where the enemy of souls reigns triumphant, and where by an idolatrous race the doctrines of a blessed Redeemer are treated with derision and contempt.<sup>218</sup>

Islam and the prophet "Mahomet" were the enemy of souls in Bradley's construction and much to her dismay, and potentially to some of her readers, those enemies reigned triumphantly in the Zahara. These statements, however, were more in line with the typical Christian-versus-Muslim rhetoric that had existed for centuries, whereby both sides believed the other to be an idolatrous heathen religion. Bradley did not draw any direct was no connection to despotism, tyranny, subjugation of women, or any claim that Islam inspired violence or savagery in its followers. The Arabs and Moors were both simply constructed as "great enemies to Christianity" for Bradley's audience."<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> N.a., *Eliza Bradley*, in Baepler, *White Slaves*, 267.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid*, 279.

Laranda's account fell very much in line with Bradley's in which Islam was set against, and Muslims were the enemies of, Christianity. Laranda recalled how she "soon found that they detested nothing so much as the name of a Christian!"<sup>220</sup> Laranda, under the pretense of veracity, claimed that whenever she was caught praying in the Christian manner she was "always sure to receive a beating" because she claimed, with the authority of a Saharan captive, that "They had all been taught when young to regard the Christian name with inconceivable abhorrence, and to hold that of Mahomet in the greatest reverence."<sup>221</sup> In this instance, Laranda seemed to be implying that it was not necessarily Islam that inspired a hatred of Christianity among the Arabs, but that their own society taught them to hate Christians. Laranda, however, later stated that not only did the "unmerciful wretches" harbor a "natural hatred towards Christians," but they had a "propensity to torture and torment them when in their power." The mere presence of Laranda's religion, "was sufficient to drive every spark of humanity from the heart of an Arab."<sup>222</sup>

The ways in which the Saharan captivity writers differed in their focus and discussion of Islam mirrors, to a great extent, what was seen previously in the urban captivity narratives and the Barbary commentaries. The parallel between the three Barbary literary genres adds further strength to the belief that by the early nineteenth century, as many of the works analyzed here were published, religion was less of a topic of importance and concern for many Americans. The Arabs, Turks, and Moors

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<sup>220</sup> N.a, *Viletta Laranda*, in Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives*, 246.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid*, 247.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid*, 249.

may have been barbarous savages, but to some of the Barbary authors their religion seems to have mattered little. One could venture to guess then that these authors, and segments of their readership, took the idea of the free exercise of religion very seriously.

### **Racial Imagination: The Arab versus the Moor**

There has been evidence in the Barbary literature to suggest that the Arabs, Moors, and Turks were thought of as distinct races of humankind by the Barbary authors and the readers who read their works. Carey and Stevens both wrote of the “variety of races” that inhabited Algiers. Shaler described the Turks as a “race of men.”<sup>223</sup> And Robbins referred to the Arabs as a “barbarous race of beings.”<sup>224</sup> There is an important point to consider. If the Arabs, Moors, and Turks were commonly thought of as distinct races of humans, then the authors of these works would not have felt it was necessary to give a lengthy explanation detailing how and why they were distinct races. Instead one would presumably find more passing references to the fact that they were separate races of humankind, which is exactly what one does find in the Barbary literature. While the Arabs, Moors, and Turks may have been distinct races in theory, there appears to have been a great deal of ambiguity, conflation, and confusion between the Arabs and the Moors.

This confusion or conflation of the two groups seems to have been the result of the fact that at a very basic level, the people who were labeled “Arab” or “Moor” looked very similar. Stevens, Carey, and Shaler all described the Arabs and the Moors

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<sup>223</sup> Shaler, *Sketches*, 30.

<sup>224</sup> Robbins, *Journal of Loss*, 85.

as swarthy, olive skinned, or tawny throughout their accounts, and the two labels were, according to Carey, “synonymous.”<sup>225</sup> Riley’s description of the Arabs and the Moors highlights their similarity in appearance. “The Arabs who inhabit[ed] the great western desert” were, according to Riley, “about five feet seven or eight inches in height; and tolerably well set in their frames, though lean; their complexion [was] of a dark olive.”<sup>226</sup> The Moors, on the other hand, “were of a difference race of men” from any Riley had “hitherto seen,” but they were “Of five feet eight on ten inches in height, and well set; their complexion a light olive—they wear their beards as long as they will grow.”<sup>227</sup> The Moors were evidently similar in height, facial appearance (they both kept long beards), and, most importantly, in skin color. The only difference was that the Moors were of a light olive skin tone whereas the Arab was a darker olive in Riley’s construction. One should also note Riley’s use of the word race. If the Moors were a “different race of men” from those he had previously encountered, then the Arabs were certainly their own distinct race of humankind.

The similarity in appearance between the Arab and the Moor seems to have even confused those who were familiar with the region. Riley’s master, Sidi Hamet, was continually described as an Arab, yet the British Consul who helped to free Riley and lived in Mogadore as a trader, William Willshire, told Riley to keep the circumstances of his personal life a secret because “should the Moors suppose you able to pay more, they would throw difficulties in the way, and thereby much retard

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<sup>225</sup> Carey, *Short History*, 5.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*, 376.

<sup>227</sup> Riley, *Authentic Narrative*, 177-78.



your redemption.”<sup>228</sup> Riley, however, was clearly in the possession of two Arabs, Sidi Hamet and his brother Seid. Willshire was not the only person in Riley’s narrative who confused the racial identity of his Arab captors. In the short time that Riley was in Gibraltar, prior to his captivity, he befriended a local merchant originally from Boston, Horatio Sprague, who played an instrumental role in his redemption. Sidi Hamet had demanded, as part of Riley’s ransom, two good double-barreled guns for himself and Seid. Sprague was the one who ended up procuring the guns and wrote to Riley stating, “I have sent him [Willshire] two double barreled guns to meet his promise to the Moor.”<sup>229</sup> The Arabs and the Moors may have been distinct races of humans in theory, but in practice it appears that there was a great deal of confusion and conflation between the two.

Despite the conflation of the Arabs and the Moors, it was the Arabs who were the primary actors juxtaposed to the American captives in the Saharan captivity tales. While the Moor and the Arab received a more equitable “screen time” in the Barbary commentaries, the accounts of Riley and Robbins were by far the most popular works considered here and certainly had a much larger readership than Stevens’, Carey’s, and Shaler’s commentaries. It was the Arabs, not the Moors, who appeared on the titles of two of early America’s more widely known books. The Moors may have been liable to some of the same stereotypical characteristics of the Arabs—the Barbary commentators noted that both groups were thievish—but due to the immense

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid, 219. Mogadore is now commonly rendered as Essaouira.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid, 304.

popularity of the Saharan and urban captivity works, it seems likely that the Arab and the Turk took precedence over the Moor in the minds of early Americans.

One question still remains: if the Arabs and the Moors were both conflated because of their swarthy appearance, than how is it that the Turks were distinguished as their own race? They clearly had their own unique set of stereotypes, but there is some evidence to suggest that the Turks were considered to be fairer-skinned in comparison to the tawny Arabs and Moors. According to John Foss the Turks were a “well built robust people, their complexion not unlike Americans, tho’ somewhat larger, but their dress, and long beards, make them appear more like monsters, than human beings.”<sup>230</sup> Stevens noted that the “Algerines about the sea coast, have a pretty fair complexion, but those in the interior parts of the country, and particularly the Arabs, are swarthy. Stevens could have been referring to the Turks in his passage, but there is no way to know for certain. Yet, if one considers racial theory of the time, the Turks did not necessarily have to differ in appearance from the Arabs to be considered a separate race. Races of humankind were determined by the environments in which they had existed for centuries and by Godly creation. The ways in which the Arab and Turk were stereotyped differently and the passing references that were made to race by the Barbary authors indicates that they were considered to be racially different. The extreme heat and uncultivated nature of the Sahara had kept the Arabs stagnant for centuries, which is why they appeared so primordial, animalistic, and sub-human in nature. An ambiguous mix between God and the environment made them thievish, surprisingly charitable, and robust. The state of despotism that the Turks had existed

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<sup>230</sup> John Foss, *Journal of John Foss*, 47.

in for centuries and Godly influence made the Turks the sexually deviant, unrestrained, lustful, cruel, violent and despotic beings they were.

### Conclusion

While the Arab and the Turk each had their own unique set of stereotypes, the characteristics that made up the essence of the archetypal Arab and Turk were stereotypes that were not necessarily limited to the inhabitants of the Barbary Coast. The accounts of primordial, wild, and savage Arabs could have just as easily been passages about Seminole Indians or Australian aboriginals.<sup>231</sup> The despotic nature and elaborate torture schemes of the Turks could have been substituted with the oriental despotism, innate cruelty, and “death by a thousand cuts” of the Chinese.<sup>232</sup> The proliferation of these stereotypes links back to the idea that early Americans saw themselves and the West as the world’s modern race. Their society was the most advanced and their form of government was the most effective and rational, but also humane, in their view. They looked out at the world’s barbarous races and saw regions of oriental and Turkish despotism which had rotted under the weight of tyrannical governments. On the blank spaces of the map they projected an image of lands inhabited by primordial savages who had not changed since the time of Christ. But American merchant vessels were not seized by Chinese pirates, nor were

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<sup>231</sup> The Seminole wars in modern day Florida were fought in three periods between 1814 and 1858, making them very contemporary events to Riley’s and Robbins’ accounts. The British colonization of Australia began in 1788 making it a relatively contemporaneous event to the Saharan captivity narratives.

<sup>232</sup> See Timothy Brook et al, *Death by a Thousand Cuts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008) for more information on Chinese stereotyping in the European imagination in the nineteenth century.

American seamen held captive by Australian Aboriginals. The Barbary Coast was the region of despotism and savagery that captivated American public consciousnesses in the 1780s after the *Maria* and *Dauphin* were seized. It was the Arab and the Turk who were the primary characters juxtaposed to American or European protagonists in the Barbary captivity narratives. And it was the Arab and the Turk who were continually stereotyped in one of the more popular forms of literature and entertainment in early American society.

## Chapter 5

### CONCLUSION

The Barbary literature's construction of racially distinct Arab and Turkish archetypes relied on the kinds of racial conceptions used by Samuel Stanhope Smith, Thomas Jefferson, and Charles Caldwell. Yet, Stanhope Smith and the entire monogenist field's argument left open the possibility that the world's degraded races of men (by which they generally meant "negroes" and Africans) could become civilized beings if they were allowed to live as free citizens in a Republic. Smith's belief in the civilizing power of a liberal Republic seems to have a natural connection to the arguments of colonialists. If "negroes" could become civilized citizens simply by living in a republic such as the United States, then why not bring liberty and civilization to them? William Shaler wholeheartedly believed that Africa could be returned to its former glory, and its inhabitants civilized, through colonization. In an argument that would be all too familiar to Edward Said, Shaler proposed that Great Britain should "determine to colonize this portion of Africa for the benefit of the world" because under British colonization:

This portion of Barbary would become more abundant in the staple productions of corn, wine, silk, wool, and cattle, than any other country, the sources of interior African trade, through which several cities in this part of Mauritania rose, under the Roman domination, to a degree of opulence and splendor which at this day seems incredible, would be re-opened; and through these channels, the produce of the

arts, and the principles of European civilization, would penetrate into the very centre of this benighted continent.<sup>233</sup>

One has to wonder why Shaler, an American, whose country had only just recently won its freedom from Great Britain, would argue for another people to be colonized by the British. Shaler's logic only seems to make sense if he truly believed that the substitution of Turkish despotism with British government would bring prosperity and Western civilization to Africa. Shaler's call for colonization was not echoed by Carey and Stevens, but in the larger picture, it was an argument which had already been made.

Riley, whose narrative had predated Shaler's work by twelve years, believed that the "connivance of the harbours, the luxuriance of the surrounding soil, and the commercial advantages" of Morocco were a "sufficient inducement for colonization."<sup>234</sup> It was "superstition, fanaticism, and tyranny" that "swept away the whole wealth of Morocco" in Riley's belief, but colonization by a Western power would presumably return Morocco to the prosperity it enjoyed when it was "inhabited by men in a higher state of civilization."<sup>235</sup> Predating Riley was Charles-Francois Dubois Thainville, the French Consul to Algiers, who argued, in an 1809 essay, that French colonization of Algiers would liberate the native Kabyles from Ottoman tyranny and free the country's rich soil from the "handful of brigands" who had depleted it for centuries.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Shaler, *Sketches*, 175.

<sup>234</sup> Riley, *Authentic Narrative*, 267.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid*, 311.

<sup>236</sup> Charles-Francois Dubois Thainville, "Sur Alger," Paris, 18 November 1809, quoted in Gillian Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs: France and Slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 130.

The ancient Roman glory of North Africa, and specifically the Roman achievements in agriculture, was an idea that became integral to the narrative that was used to justify the French presence in Algeria. The settlers who came to colonize Algeria fashioned a foundation myth in which they linked themselves to Algeria's Roman past and saw themselves as a regenerative force in North Africa. That is not to say that France's use of Rome's legacy in North Africa was a predetermined justification for colonization; it was, in the words of Patricia Lorcin, "a multidirectional process where disparate components came together gradually, and by 1860, "the concept of the Roman legacy that bound Algeria to France had taken shape."<sup>237</sup> The motley mix of French, Spanish, Sardinian, Italian, Corsican, and Maltese colonizers became known as the "Latins of Africa" in the French connection to Algeria's Roman past.<sup>238</sup> The process of reclaiming Algeria's Roman past over its Islamic and Arab present was a slow development but as that Roman legacy became part of the "collective memory of the colony" the legacy of Rome began to anchor the "Latins of Africa" in the Algerian landscape as the country's "rightful owners."<sup>239</sup> Louis Bertrand, one of the most influential sources in the development of the Roman legacy narrative, believed that the Latins of Africa were going to rejuvenate the soil the Romans had once successfully tilled and that the Arabs had wasted.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Patricia M.E. Lorcin, "Rome and France in Africa: Recovering Colonial Algeria's Latin Past," *French Historical Studies*, 25.5 (2002), 327.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid, 318-19.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid, 328.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid, 321. For a more in-depth analysis of the French focus on the former agricultural achievements of Roman North Africa and the formation of the myth that the Arabs depleted the soil of Algeria see, Diana K. Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary*

The fixation the Algerian colonists had on North Africa's Roman past and their near obsession with the soil shares a number of interesting parallels with the writings of the American Barbary authors. Stevens, Carey, and Shaler all put a great deal of emphasis on the ancient wonder and former glory of Roman Algeria which was, in their construction, destroyed by Algerine barbarism and Turkish despotism. Shaler specifically remarked on what he believed to be the advantageous position of numerous cities which had rotted under the weight of Turkish tyranny. Shaler, Riley, and Thainville all made explicit references to the potential that the Algerian soil held and all three believed that the inhabitants of Algiers had, in some form or another, depleted or failed to utilize the soil properly. Lorcin notes that the French military officers who were part of the expedition that conquered Algiers consulted and carried with them the works of "Shaler, Shaw, and Raynal."<sup>241</sup> I do not mean to assert that the colonial narrative of French Algeria was directly influenced or developed because of Shaler's work, but there certainly seems to be an interesting connection between the writings of these American Barbary commentators and the colonial narrative that was developed in the same century. It is a connection that is definitely worth investigating.

This work was introduced with a short discussion on the twenty-first century manifestations of what has been termed "Islamophobia." A few sparing remarks have been made in which the Barbary authors' views were compared with the Islamophobic rhetoric of present-day commentators, but now would be the most appropriate time to take a more in depth look at those comparisons. Of all the Barbary authors, Shaler's

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*of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007).

<sup>241</sup> Lorcin, "Rome and France in Africa," 298.



commentary on the link between Islamic governance and barbarism shares the greatest overlap with twenty-first century rhetoric. Newt Gingrich is on record stating that “America is experiencing an Islamist cultural-political offensive designed to undermine and destroy our civilization.”<sup>242</sup> The United States is in Gingrich’s construction, the land of freedom, equality, and democracy. Islam, however, stands to threaten in American because it is a religion which hates the American values of freedom, democracy, and equality. Shaler, on the other hand, implied that when Islam is connected to the government, it fosters an uncivilized and barbarous nature within its citizens. No matter if those citizens were Nigerian Sufis, Yemeni Shi’ites, Alawaite Syrians, Sunni Afghans, or converted white Americans, if the government were Islamic, its citizens would eventually resemble the barbarous inhabitants of Algiers. Gingrich’s construction takes a very similar view, except for the fact that it does not require Islamic governance to turn Muslims into violent extremists: their religion will, under any circumstance, inspire them to become “terrorists.” It is in this last detail that Shaler and Gingrich differ quite drastically. In Shaler’s view, Muslims under Western governance could be prosperous and civilized individuals, but in the twenty-first century conception, Muslims will always represent a threat to democracy, freedom, and equality.

It is of course not my assertion that Shaler’s words had any influence on Gingrich or any other twenty-first century commentator. The purpose of the

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<sup>242</sup> Michael Gerson. “The problem with Gingrich’s simplistic attacks on sharia.” *Washington Post*, 12 December 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-problem-with-gingrichs-simplistic-attack-on-sharia/2011/12/12/gIQAv0nZqO\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-problem-with-gingrichs-simplistic-attack-on-sharia/2011/12/12/gIQAv0nZqO_story.html) (accessed May 6, 2012);

discussion was simply to highlight the fact that the outbursts of “Islamophobia” that have surfaced from time to time in the past decade are not as original as one may think. While Gingrich did not pick up his ideas from Shaler’s *Sketches*, that does not mean that the Barbary literary field and the stereotypical constructions that were developed within it were forgotten as the publication runs of Riley’s and Robbins’ narratives finally slowed in the 1850s. The Barbary literary field continued well into the late nineteenth and twentieth century, albeit in differing forms. Paul Baepler notes that the captivity narrative shifted into the juvenile pulp fiction market in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. *The Algerine, The Corsair Prince, The Boy Bedouins, We Three (or The White Boy Slaves of the Soudan), and Seven Boy Slaves (or Wrecked on the Desert of Sahara)* were dime novels which saw numerous reprints under different names and remained popular well into the twentieth century. *Pluck and Luck* was a dime novel series that ran in the *Golden Weekly* from July 30 to September 17, 1891. *Driven to the Sea; or, the Sailor’s Secret (A Story of the Algerine Corsairs)* was one the adventure stories contained within the series (see figure 1).<sup>243</sup>

The Barbary theme continued to appear in differing forms of literature and entertainment throughout the twentieth century. The cowboy known as “Tom Mix” was a fictional literary character who reappeared in numerous juvenile works by different authors. In one piece, published in 1940, Tom Mix and his circus crash land on the Barbary Coast and he is forced to defend himself and his companions from the

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<sup>243</sup> Baepler, *White Slaves*, 49.

local inhabitants (see figure 2).<sup>244</sup> John De Morgan's 1933 work, *Taming the Barbary Pirates*, utilized America's short war with the Regency of Tripoli (1801-1805) as a stage for his adult fiction (see figure 3).<sup>245</sup> As late as 1955 an adventure novel titled *Barbary Slave: Passion And Plunder A Rule Pagan Land* continued the Barbary theme for America's reading audience (see figure 4).<sup>246</sup>

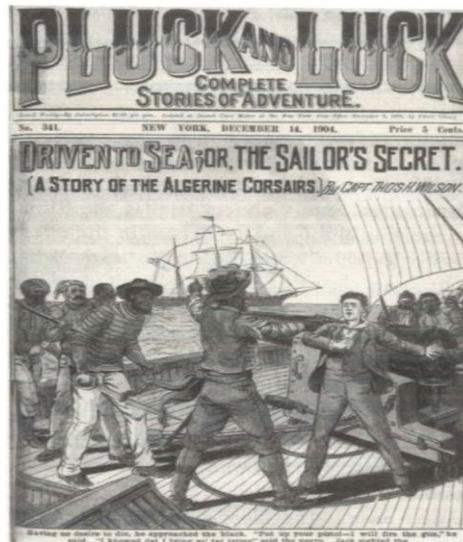


Figure 1 Pluck and Luck.

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<sup>244</sup> Baepler, "Barbary Captivity Narrative in Early America," 221; see Pete Daryll, *Tom Mix and His Circus on the Barbary Coast* (Wisconsin: Whitman, 1940).

<sup>245</sup> Baepler, "Barbary Captivity Narrative in Early America," 224.; see John De Morgan, *Taming the Barbary Pirates, or, With Decatur and Somers in the Mediterranean* (Massachusetts: McLoughlin Bros., 1933).

<sup>246</sup> Baepler, "Barbary Captivity Narrative in Early America," 226; see Kevin Matthews, *Barbary Slave: Passion and Plunder Rule A Pagan Land* (New York: Popular Library, 1955).

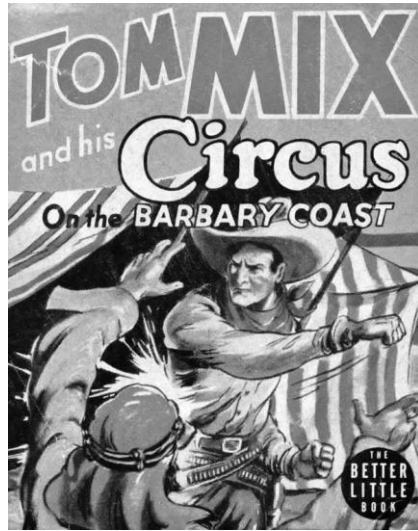


Figure 2 Tom Mix.



Figure 3 Taming the Barbary Pirates.

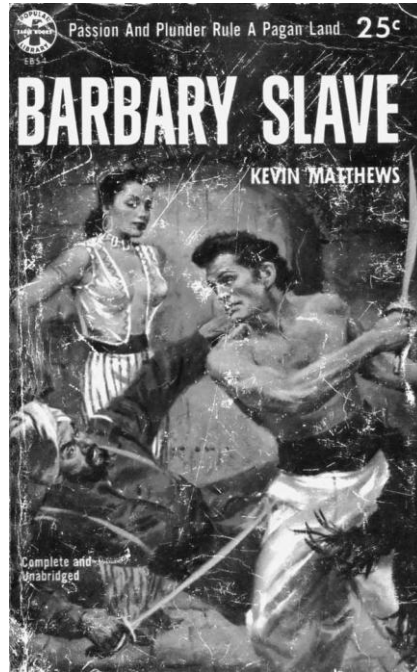


Figure 4 Barbary Slave.

The Barbary theme even made its way into the advertising world. In the 1930s Barbary slave galleys were used in advertisements for the Packard Custom Eight De Luxe automobile (see figure 5).

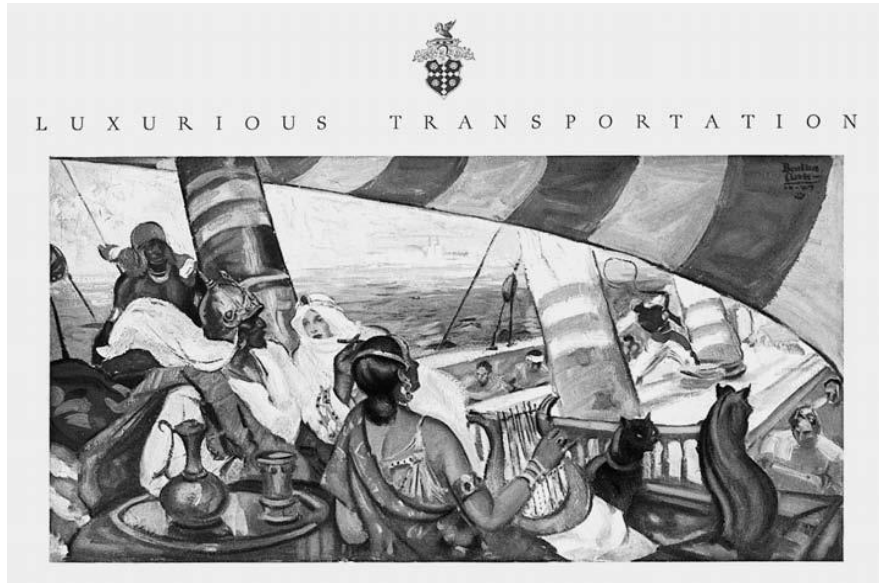


Figure 5 Packard Custom Eight De Luxe

The original advertisement read: “The galleys of the Barbary Corsairs—those ruthless privateers who raided the coasts and commerce of the Mediterranean in the 16<sup>th</sup> century—were magnificently equipped in the height of barbaric luxury.”<sup>247</sup> In her 2005 book, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests In The Middle East Since 1945*, Melani McAlister discusses how department store advertising in the 1940s and 1950s utilized scenes from the Arab Orient to market their products. The advertising scheme appeared to be so successful that restaurants and hotels began to utilize the Arab East in their advertisements. The “Garden of Allah” advertisements

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<sup>247</sup> Baepler, *Barbary Captivity Narrative*,” 221 and 224.

were so popular that they were remade into a Hollywood movie which was released in 1927 and remade in 1936.<sup>248</sup>

While the Barbary theme continued in American society after Riley's and Robbins' narratives' publication run came to an end, there is no way to know how, or if, the stereotypes that were so strongly developed in the eighteenth and early to mid-nineteenth century Barbary literature were manifested in these later works. Stereotyping and racial or ethnic group perceptions, however, are not static processes. They evolve over time as successive generations have their own life experiences which will surely alter how they perceive and stereotype racial or ethnic "Others." One can venture to guess that the pieces of the Arab and Turk archetypes survived and made it into these later works. Others parts were almost assuredly abandoned and, perhaps, some aspects of the archetypal Arab and Turk morphed and mixed together. What is certain, though, is that an analysis of how the Barbary theme and its associated stereotypes continued to evolve in American society in the latter half of the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries would make for an interesting follow-up to this work.

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<sup>248</sup> Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East Since 1945* (California: University of California Press, 2005), 22-24.

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