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**Captivity and Identity in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*
or, *The Royal Slave* (1688) and Penelope Aubin's
The Noble Slaves (1722).**

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N° d'Ordre :

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To:

*my dear parents
Ali and Baya
my dear brother Salim
my dear sister Houria
my best friends*

Djamila

To:

*my dear parents
Said and Djouher
my dear brothers especially Mouloud
my dear sisters
my best friends*

Karima

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Abstract

This dissertation intends to study how the issue of captivity exposes identity both religious and cultural to the threat of the Other in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave. A True History* (1688) and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1772). It aims to argue that captivity has a great effect on the captive's identity, religion and culture. To achieve our aim, we have relied on New Historicist principles and Michel Foucault's concepts of power and domination that insist on the importance of the interpretation of literary works in relation to their historical context. This work consists of three main chapters. The first one deals with the representation of the issue of captivity and slavery in *Oroonoko* and in *The Noble Slaves*. The second chapter is about the effects of captivity on the captives' identity, culture and religion in both narratives. The third chapter deals with the theme of resistance and subversive strategies that the captives adopt against their masters in order to preserve their culture that is threatened by the encounter with the Other. Our study reached the conclusion that the two narratives depict the system of slavery as inhuman as the two authors' discourse tends to sympathize with the captives and misrepresent the captors who maintain the unjust system. The captors use their power in order to insure the domination of the captives. Finally, the latter adopt subversive tactics to eliminate or decrease their suffering as escape and rebellion.

Key Words: Captivity, Slavery, Otherness, Subversion, Culture, Religion, Identity.

I. Introduction

This paper attempts to examine how the issue of captivity exposes identity, both religious and cultural, to the threat of the Other in both Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave. A True History* (1688) and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1722). These works belong to the category of captivity narrative, a prominent literary genre that can be clearly defined as an autobiographical work that is based on reality and involves elements of religion, history and fiction. In fact, this genre of narrative has American origins that goes back to the very beginning of the seventeenth century, and was the first literary form dominated by women's experiences.¹

Captivity narratives contain stories of captivity, suffering, rescue and escape, and they seem to appeal to primal human emotions and fit the ever-popular romance narrative.² They are the accounts made by captives who have recorded their experiences in foreign lands. As Charles Ferdinand Wimar discusses captivity narratives a usually stories or tales of people captured by enemies whom they consider uncivilized, without customs and beliefs.

Besides, Captivity narrative can be classified into different categories: American captivity narratives and the Barbary captivity narratives. The first consists of stories of the white Christians captured by the native Indians; for instance, the narrative of Mary Rowlandson's *the Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682). The second, is defined by Baepler as "tales of whites captured and enslaved in North Africa;"³ it means Christians captured by Barbary pirates of North Africa, and the most popular story of this genre is Maria Martin's *History of Captivity and Suffering of Maria Martin* (1807). These two categories, however, deal with the same themes such as captivity, enslavement, struggle and escape.

In their captivity narratives, Aphra Behn and Penelope Aubin discuss similar themes but in different ways. For Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave*, the protagonist Oroonoko, is an African prince captured and imprisoned by the British in America, whereas in Penelope Aubin's *Noble Slaves*, the protagonists are white Europeans imprisoned in North Africa by the Barbary pirates. However, in their writing, both writers show how the captives suffer from cruelty, hard work, insult, misery and murder. Despite this bad treatment, they do not forget their cultures and the sense of belonging, and they still have some hope to get freedom and return to their home countries.

Review of the literature

Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave* (1688) and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1722) have received much attention from a number of critics. Concerning Aphra Behn's narrative, Laura Brown, in her essay entitled *The Romance of Empire: Oroonoko and Trade in Slaves* (1987), argues that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries *Oroonoko* is considered as an anti-slavery narrative. In this context, she asserts: "the novella has been recognized as a seminal work in the tradition of anti-slavery writings from the time of its publication down to our own period".⁴ In addition, in *Translating Slavery: Gender and Race in French Women's Writing, 1783-1823* Brown claims that Behn's novella deals with different issues such as gender and race. In this sense, she states: "Oroonoko can serve as a theoretical test case for the necessary connection of race and gender".⁵

Besides, in his article entitled *Anti-colonialism vs Colonialism in Aphra Behn's Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave*, Said Abdelwahed discusses anti-colonialism versus colonialism in Aphra Behn's novel. Abdelwahed considers that *Oroonoko* as an anti-slavery novel in which Mrs. Behn sets an example to be followed by other women novelists to write in a new field and to fight against strongly built unjust socio-economic institution.⁶ That is to

say, *oronoko* is regarded as an anti-colonial text in the sense that Behn opposes the British colonial system used in the new world. The text puts emphasis on the horrors of slavery and paints many of the white colonists as brutal, greedy and dishonest. In fact, he claims that it is until the twentieth century that Mrs. Behn receives much criticism. Many scholars have described her as a prominent professional Restoration writer worthy of study.⁷

Said Abdelwahed adds that Behn focuses her attention on the aspects of freedom and slavery. In this respect, he states: “Mrs. Behn introduces three different cultures of colonial and colonized nations, as well as the controversial issue of slavery and freedom”.⁸ The quotation implies that Behn’s narrative is an encounter of cultures. Therefore, The author affirms that Behn locates Surinam and its culture as the best exotic land for the others in which she advocates an early idea of the noble savage.⁹ Moreover, he adds: “in *Oroonoko*, Aphra Behn introduces colonialism represented by the institution of slavery with its strong and oppressive power, then she encounters it with love as anti-colonialist too.”¹⁰

Similarly, many studies have been conducted on Penelope Aubin’s *The Noble Slaves* (1722). For instance, Omar Moumni’s *In Barbary Captivity Narrative and Resistance in Early Popular English Fiction*, asserts that Penelope Aubin’s *the Noble Slaves* is an important heritage in literature. Moumni writes that Aubin through her novel attempts to “support the colonialist discourse by celebrating the Christian virtue in the alien land”.¹¹ According to him, Aubin presents the female captives as heroines in the Barbary land where they adopt strategies of resistance against their masters to preserve their virtue. In addition, Moumni points out that the Barbary land becomes the land of power and freedom for the female captives, who loses their freedom in their home countries and “the weak female captives become powerful masters”¹² in the exotic land.

In the same context, Joe Snader in *the Oriental Captivity Narrative and Early English Fiction* states that English women in *The Noble Slaves*, during their experience of

enslavement in North Africa, attain social status through power and wealth as he confirms: “heroines gain wealth from their oriental masters.”¹³ In this respect, he adds: “several heroines obtain hordes of jewels from the luxurious costumes their masters had forced them to wear.”¹⁴ Moreover, the wealth that heroines gain enables them to escape and return home.

Issue and Working Hypotheses

From the previous review, we notice that issues of gender, race, colonialism and anti-colonialism have been the concern of many studies from which the critics approached the captivity narratives. However, though some of these studies have dealt with slavery and captivity in both Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave* (1688) and Penelope Aubin’s *The Noble Slaves* (1722), no academic research, according to our knowledge, has been conducted on how captivity affected and threatened the captives’ identity, religion and culture, and how they find strategies to resist.

Therefore, our study will focus on the two captivity narratives as an interesting area of investigation, through which we will try to show how the issue of captivity exposes identity, both religious and cultural to the threat of the Other. In both, Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave* (1688) and Penelope Aubin’s *The Noble Slaves* (1722), the captives have similar experiences and face the same issues but in different periods and places. In this dissertation, we will emphasize how both White Christians and the Black Africans, who were captured and sold to slavery, underwent similar hardships and suffering under the control of the captors “Other”. In fact, all the captives suffer from the different shocks of captivity and enslavement that affect their identity, religion as well as their culture. As slaves, they confront different cultures that threaten them and even their identity. Thus, the captives in the two narratives resist to the power of their masters to preserve their religion, identity and culture. To reach our aim, we will rely on the principles of New Historicism that fits our study in the sense that New Historicism insists on the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts according to their

historical context. In addition, New Historicism develops some interesting concepts for our study as discourse, power, and subversion.

Accordingly, our work divides into three sections. In the Methods and Materials, we present briefly the New Historicist approach and include short summaries, and the historical background of the two selected narratives. In the Results section, we give an overview of our findings. The Discussion section divides into three chapters. The first one deals with the representation of the issue of captivity and slavery in both narratives. The second is about the impacts of captivity and slavery on the captives in both narratives. The third one deals with the theme of subversion strategies in the same narratives. Finally, our work ends with a general conclusion.

Endnotes

¹Rebecca L. Harrison, *Cunning Texts: Confederate Daughters and the "Trick-Tongue" of Captivity* (Georgia State University: Department of English, 2007).

²John. Vanderlyn, *Captivity Narrative Death of Jane McCrea*, (University of Hoston, 1804).

³Paul. Beapler, *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*, (University of Chicago Press 1999).

⁴Laura. brown, *The Romance of Empire: Oronooko and Trade in Slaves* (1987), 42.

⁵Doris Y. Kadish, *Translating Slavery: Gender and Race in French Women's Writing (1783-1823)*, 35

⁶Said. Abdelwahed, *Anti-colonialism vs Colonialism in Aphra Behn's Oroonoko; or, The Royal Slave*, 1.

⁷Ibid, 2.

⁸Ibid, 2.

⁹Ibid, 4.

¹⁰Ibid, 5.

¹¹Omar. Moumni, *Barbary Captivity Narratives and Resistance in Early Popular English Fiction* (2013), 52.

¹²Ibid, 53.

¹³Joe. Snader, *The Oriental Captivity Narrative and Early English Fiction*, (University of Maryland), 26.

¹⁴Ibid, 26.

II. Methods and Materials

1. New Historicism

In order to accomplish our work, we will rely on the principles of New Historicism. The latter is a school of literary criticism that appeared in North America in the 1980s with a large focus on Renaissance Studies. It is practiced and developed by the critic Stephen Greenblatt and other leading figures such as Louis Montrose, Catherine Gallagher, Alan Liu and many others. New Historicism attempts to understand the literary work through its historical context. According to the American critic Louis Montrose, New Historicism insists on “the textuality of history and the historicity of text.”¹⁵ Thus, a literary work cannot be read and understood in isolation because it is created within a set of cultural and social conditions. To argue, Aram Veesser argues that New Historicism “attempts to explain facts, by reference to earlier facts [...] I mean the attempts to find explanation and relevant material in social sciences other than the one which is primarily under investigation.”¹⁶ In fact, New Historicism sees that “literary history cannot be seen in isolation from other historical forces.”¹⁷

New Historicists claim that literature reflects history and gives a specific interpretation to it. Therefore, literature is not only a product of the author, but it is a production of social and cultural forces. According to Greenblatt, literature is an important element in the “cultural creation of identity.”¹⁸ Therefore, this theorist considers literature as a mean that represents history and involves information of the historical events of a given period. In this sense, we cannot reach any understanding of a literary text without its historical, political, social and cultural contexts.

2. Michel Foucault’s the concepts of power and domination

New Historicism also insists on the historicity of text in relation to society, power, or ideology in a given time. In fact, New Historicism seeks to reveal ways in which populations

are marginalized, discriminated, and otherized through the study a literary text. It is much influenced by the French philosopher Michel Foucault. This theorist claims that the norms of a culture are constructed and formed by those who support power. According to him, the concept of power refers to the relations of domination and resistance of the individuals in a given society.¹⁹ He sees that power is created and extended with society. Favoring Foucault's assumption, the Russian theorist Michael Bakhtin claims that every history includes resistances to the dominant power.²⁰ This approach also puts emphasis on the ideology of the culture and the author's inclination, either consciously or unconsciously, governed his or her literary work. According to Dwight W. Hoover "the New Historicism argues that there is no universal meaning or truth in history and that the meaning imputed to history reflects power relations at the time of writing as well as the time of the events occurrence."²¹

Moreover, Foucault encodes the concept of discourse within the New Historicism. This concept refers to statements, texts and relationships that function together to form practices and fields of study in a given society. According to him, the concept of discourse does not only elaborate on the existent things but also on the creation and perpetuation of meaning within literary works.²² Moreover, Discourse can be viewed as a form of power that circulates in the society and can also be related to strategies of domination and resistance. This is explained as follows:

New historicism focuses in particular on the economic and historical contexts of cultures, examines the intertextual relations between various texts and methods of discourse, and views all literary texts as historical documents. New historicists tend to believe that all forms of discourse and writing interact with and are determined by other discourses and writings in a particular historical time.²³

Arguably, Michel Foucault considers power as a "way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action."²⁴ This theorist argues that power cannot be only a physical or subversive force but also a productive and persuasive one,

which determines our relationship with others. Foucault claims that “slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains, only when he has some possible mobility, even a chance of escape.”²⁵ It means that power refers to strategies in which a dominant race or group exerts its influence over the marginal. To some extent, this hegemonic power does not necessarily rely on physical violence; it may rely on the threat of punishment.

Moreover, in his essay entitled *Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion*, Stephen Greenblatt developed the concept of power by referring to the terms “subversion” and “containment.” He argues that subversion is not only “contained by the power it would appear to threaten... [But also] the very product of that power.”²⁶ In this context, the dominant cultures through their power allow the subordinated populations to have the capacity to produce certain forms of subversion and resistance. That is to say, the subordinated societies use subversive tactics as a response to change their situation and end the power abuse of the dominant society. Thus, subversion is the product of the power of the dominant culture. In this context, Louis Montrose argues that subversion is “the capacity of the dominant order to generate subversion so as to use it to its own ends.”²⁷

Within New Historicism, resistance and rebellion are seen as results of power. In this context, Foucault asserts: “where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.”²⁸ In addition, subversion is seen as something fictional or surreal. That is to say, it is unimaginable how the dominant groups are able to act, circulate and subvert in a given situation. James Holstun states:

The very concept of subversion is unsatisfactory for describing resistance or revolution. “Subversion” is more likely to be the fantasy of someone inside a dominant subculture, whether he is eager to identify it and root it out, or to identify with it . . . In a sense, the debate over subversion and containment is a nondebate, since "subversion" is already included in "containment."²⁹

In sum, we will rely on the concepts that we have introduced as important part of New Historicism. These concepts are discourse, power, domination and subversion. These fit our study of the system of power, related to slavery and captivity, in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave* (1688) and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1722).

3. Historical Background

Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave*. (1688) and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slave* (1722) are written by English women writers in the mid seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This period was characterized by its development in different fields such as science, politics, industry, society, economics, commerce, technology and literature. It was also a period of discovery, exploration and the beginning of European Imperialism.

Queen Elizabeth encouraged exploration and discovery to build colonies in the New World. Therefore, the English colonization of North America began in 1607. In fact, some of American territories, such as Surinam, were long colonized by the French, Spanish and Dutch. All these European countries went to search for wealth and trading opportunities. By the late sixteenth century, thousands of African people were captured and transported as slaves to Western Europe. Therefore, Britain became the first trader of the enslaved Africans, who were transported in British vessels to its colonies to work in the plantations of South America. Moreover, "the enslavement of Africans is justified in Britain by claiming that they were barbarous savages, without laws or religion."³⁰ As slaves, the Africans suffered from poverty and physical hardship, which marked their life under slavery. As a result, they resist through rebellion and a variety of indirect protests against their status of slaves.

During the seventeenth century, there was a great interaction between the Western British power and the Islamic community of the Barbary Coast of North Africa, especially with the Ottoman Empire. In fact, the latter was considered as one of the most powerful

empires in the world under the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent. This power helped it to spread rapidly and take control over the Mediterranean. As a result, the Ottoman commerce and trade increased. Moreover, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, more than one million Europeans were mostly captured by the Barbary pirates and Barbary slave traders and sold them to slavery. In fact, the Barbary pirates occupied all the coast of North Africa that is known now as Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. During that time, many British ships were kidnapped and a number of British sailors were captured by the Barbary corsairs and taken into slavery.

At that time, England established a friendly relation with North Africa. In order to defeat the Spanish Armada, which wanted to spread Catholicism in England and even in the world, England asked for help from the Ottomans and requested a military protection to its trade in the sea. Nabil Matar illustrates this in the following quotation:

Despite this strong sense of separation between Christians and Muslims, Queen Elizabeth became the first English monarch to cooperate openly with the Muslims, and to allow her subjects to trade and interact with them without being liable to prosecution for dealing with “infidels.” Eager to find new markets for her merchants and secure military support against Spain.³¹

Later on, this relationship between the two sides is changed. The Ottoman Empire is measured as a threat and foe of European civilization economically and religiously. Therefore, the Mediterranean Sea became as Marry Louise Pratt call it a “contact zone”³² for the practice of piracy by the Turks against the foreign ships especially the Christian ones, or as “a social space where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical of relation of domination and subordination.”³³ In other words, North Africa was the zone where the two different cultures met and mixed. In this zone, the white Christian captives became victims of the inhumanity of the Turks. Therefore, the encounter between the two, create the superiority of the Turks over the Europeans who were tortured in

the Barbary land. So, the main purpose of the Ottomans was to capture the Christians and enslave them.

In fact, the practice of piracy and slave trade by the two powers, the British and the Ottomans, helped in the growth of the problem of captivity and slavery in the world. In term of slavery, Britain adopted the system of transporting the Africans to her colonies in the New World as slaves, criminals and servants. However, the transportation was seen as a human act in 1597, but centuries later, it was introduced as a criminal act in 1717.

In addition, the strategies of imperialism and colonialism that the Ottomans and the British adopted in this period led to the need for the work force. To achieve their goal, they captured people from different countries. Among the literary works that developed the issue of slavery, we found the work of Aphra Behn's *Oronooko or, The Royal Slave* (1688) and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1722). The two narratives deal with the same historical events of the period and treat the themes of captivity and slavery.

Therefore, both Aphra Behn and Penelope Aubin are influenced by the changes that happened in their country in the mid seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Like other Restoration authors, Behn and Aubin viewed slavery as barbarian and evil practice of both the British and the Ottomans. They lived in a period "called the most conflict-ridden period in British history."³⁴ It was also known as a Restoration period, which began in 1660 and ended in 1785. In political terms, King Charles II restored the English monarchy before his execution. But in literature, it is also a period of restoration of feminist writings after the long alienation and subordination of women.

As a conclusion, the issues of captivity and slavery resulted from the contact between the British and the Ottomans of North Africa. Aphra Behn and Penelope Aubin were both influenced by the social, cultural and political events of the mid seventeenth and early

eighteenth centuries, which inspired them in writing their narratives. Thus, *Oroonoko* and *The Noble Slaves* contain historical events of captivity and slavery of the mid seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Materials

This part includes materials that we use in the discussion section. These materials consist of a brief summary of Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave*. (1688) and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1722). The two literary works reflect the historical context of captivity and slavery that shaped their period of production. Both are English narratives written in the mid seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when the Atlantic slave trade and African slave in colonial America became a transnational economic system.

1. The summary of Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave* (1688):

Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave is Behn's most significant novel, a story of an African prince named Oroonoko and his beloved wife Imoinda, who are captured by the British and brought to Surinam as slaves. The narrative takes place primarily in a colony that is situated in the northern coast of South America during the 1640s, just before the English surrendered the colony to the Dutch.

The narrative has two distinct parts. The first part is set in the African country Coramantien, where the author presents the young Oroonoko as a noble African prince and a well-educated black man who falls in love with the black Imoinda. However, the king of Coramantien, the grandfather of Oroonoko, has also fallen in love with the young and beautiful Imoinda. He sends her the royal veil to show that she becomes one of his wives. However, Oroonoko has secretly married her. Later on, the old king discovers Oroonoko's relationship with Imoinda. Then he decides to sell her into slavery. Unfortunately, the African

prince is captured by his captain who transports him from Coramantien to Surinam where he is sold to the British colonist, Mr. Trefry.

The two lovers meet again in Surinam that is the setting of the second part of the narrative. In the plantation, the Black heroes get new names, since a lot of African names are hard to pronounce. The protagonist Oroonoko is known as Caesar and Imoinda as Clemene. Fighting for the freedom of himself and his wife and their future child, Oroonoko inspires his fellow slaves to rebel against their owners and to flee from the plantation.

At the end, Oroonoko realizes that he will never be free and that his child will be born in captivity and sold into slavery. After a slave revolt, he kills his wife and the unborn child. Finally, he is brutally executed and remained as a lesson to all other black slaves not to disobey the white masters.

2. The summary of Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1722):

Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves: or, The Lives and Adventures of Two Lords and Two Ladies* is a captivity narrative published in 1722. It tells us the stories of the European noblemen who are cast and shipwrecked upon a desolate Island, near the East Indies, in the year 1710. The narrative is about captivity and enslavement of the Christians in Algiers.

Penelope Aubin's narrative contains stories told episodically, each episode with a hero's tale. It deals with the stories of a great number of European Christians, who are violently captured in the Mediterranean Sea by the Algerian pirates. Therefore, in the Barbary land the captives are taken to the slave market and sold to the Ottoman masters. Furthermore, as slaves in Algiers, they suffered so much from hard work, insult, misery and separation from their families, friends and countries. In addition, during their enslavement, the captives

struggled to preserve their religion and identity that are threatened by the foreign owners who force them to convert to Islam, but the captives do never accept.

The Christian women are the most who suffer during their enslavement because they are threatened to lose their virtue and religion because of the barbarous masters who force them into bed. Despite the harsh treatment they receive, the captives resist the Ottoman barbarity and cruelty. Then, they plan to escape and get liberty from the strangers and their only aim in the exotic land is to preserve their virtue and please God as the best security from all dangers that they encounter. Despite the horror of slavery in the Muslims' land, the captives resist and struggle to protect their religion and identity.

At the end, after a long resistance to the captors' temptations, all the noble men and women who meet in North Africa succeed to escape and get freedom from the barbarity of the Turks and return to their respective countries Italy, Spain and France in safety in 1718.

Endnotes

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¹⁶Aram. Veenser, *The New Historicism Reader*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 10.

¹⁷Thomas. Brook, *The New Historicism and Other Old-Fashioned Topics*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), xv.

¹⁸Stephen. Greenblatt, *Renaissance self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*, (Chicago: university of Chicago, 1980), 5.

¹⁹Michel. Foucault, *Power*. Ed. by James Faubion. Tr. by Robert Hubley and others (New York: The New Press, 1954-1984), 341.

²⁰James C. Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance* (Yale University Press New Haven and London, 1990), 122.

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²⁴Michel. Foucault, *Power*. (New York: The New Press, 1954-1984), 341.

²⁵Ibid, 342.

²⁶Steven. Mullaney, *Discursive Forums, Cultural Practices: History and Anthropology in Literary Studies* (University of Michigan:Department of English, October 1990), 9.

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²⁸Steven. Mullaney, *Discursive Forums, Cultural Practices: History and Anthropology in Literary Studies*, 11.

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³⁰Marika. Sherwood, “*Britain, Slavery and the Trade in Enslaved Africans*,” (institution of historical research: 2007). [Online] available: www.history.ac.Uk>articles>Sherwood. (Accessed on the 5th May 2016).

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³³Ibid, 217-246.

³⁴Kennedy. Brittany, *Aphra Behn's Oroonoko: The Royal Slave Analysis and Summary*, (2016). [Online] available: <https://letterpile.com/books/An-Analysis-of-Authority-in-Aphra-Behns-Oroonoko>. (Accessed on the 5th May 2016).

III. Results and Discussion

Our research attempts to study how the issues of captivity and slavery expose identity, both religious and cultural to the threat of the other in both Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave* (1688) and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1722). In other words, it aims to examine the impact of the encounter between the Europeans and the Africans. In order to reach our aim, we have relied on the principles of New Historicism that insist on the importance of the connection of the literary works to their historical context. After a close reading of the two works, we have found out that both narratives reflect so many historical events of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and both authors depict a system of bondage "Slavery and Captivity" using a similar discourse based on power, domination, marginalization and Othering in depicting the captives and the captors. They also deal with the influence of the same system on the captives' identity.

In dealing with the way captivity and slavery are represented by the British female authors Aphra Behn and Penelope Aubin in their narratives, it is noticeable that they are negatively portrayed. *Oroonoko* and *The Noble Slaves* represent captivity and slavery in the same way, as inhuman institutions. Both works show how these "institutions" reduce the image of the captives into mere objects that have to obey all orders in order to please the masters. In fact, this stereotypical representation serves the slave owners' needs either for sexual intentions or business ones. In both narratives, the authors express their opposition to such issues and show how the enslaved captives either the Africans or the Europeans face captivity and slavery outside their native countries.

After the examination of the two narratives, it has become obvious that both captivity and slavery have great effects on the captive's culture and religion. Therefore, the captives either the Christians or the Africans are threatened to lose their native identity due to the

encounter with the “Other.” The barbarous captors “Others” forced them to adopt their culture, religions and traditions that all led to the destruction of the captives’ ones. In addition, both authors reveal the religious clash between the Westerners and the Easterners either in the colonial America or in the Barbary lands of North Africa.

Throughout our analysis, we have noticed that in both Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave* (1688) and Penelope Aubin’s *The Noble Slaves* (1722), the captives are influenced by the image given to them by their cruel masters as well as their status in the foreign societies. However, after a long suffering from power abuse and dominance, the enslaved characters struggle for their freedom. In both narratives, they adopt the strategy of resistance and subversion against their captors to preserve themselves and their culture.

Discussion:

This section intends to discuss the results reached after our examination of the two captivity narratives: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave* (1668) and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1722). In the first chapter, we intend to study the representation of captivity and slavery in both works. The second chapter deals with the effects of captivity and slavery on the captives' identity, culture and religion. The third chapter is devoted to the examination of the subversive strategies that the captives adopt against their captors.

Chapter One: The Representation of Captivity and Slavery in *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave* (1688) and in *The Noble Slaves* (1722).

The issues of captivity and slavery are apparent in both Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave* (1688) and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1722). Captivity and slavery are represented by both authors as inhuman acts. For instance, in *Oroonoko*, Behn presents captivity and slavery through the practice of Slave Trade in the Mediterranean. Historically, the Slave Trade is "the procuring, transporting and selling of human beings as slaves, in particular the former trade in African Blacks as slaves by European countries and North America."³⁵ So, the process of buying and selling of human beings as slaves reached its peak in the mid eighteenth century between the Western and Eastern countries. In Behn's narrative, the African prince Oroonoko and his wife Imoinda are captured by the British colonists and brought to Surinam as slaves. Therefore, the author, through the protagonist Oroonoko, attempts to show the savagery of slavery and that of the slave owners. She insists on how the British colonists treated the African slaves very cruelly. Oroonoko says:

we are bought and sold like apes or monkeys, to be the sport of women, fools and cowards; and the support of rogues and runagates, that have abandoned their own countries for rapine, murders, theft, and villainies....And shall we render obedience to such a degenerate race, who have no human virtue left, to distinguish them from the vilest of creature.³⁶

Behn through this quote illustrates how the British colonists behaved villainously with the slaves. The latter are captured and uprooted from their own countries in order to be slaves to such “degenerate race.”³⁷ So, Behn realizes how slavery is an inhuman act practiced against the African captives, who are mistreated by their owners. According to Hassan Rawat, slavery is “an involuntary servitude imposed upon a person by another person or persons. Absence of volition of man in his actions, or forced servitude.”³⁸ In the context of the narrative, slavery is a criminal or an inhuman act that was imposed by the British owners upon the Africans voluntarily and by force.

In addition, Slavery according to Hegel is based on Master-Slave relationships. He said, “The master is a consciousness that defines itself only in mutual relation to the slave’s consciousness a process of mediation and mutual dependence.”³⁹ That is to say, the relationships between slaves and their masters is characterized by “mutual dependency”⁴⁰ which means that the master is dependent on the slave’s loyalty and the slave is dependent on the master’s will. In other words, master-slave relationships are based on control and submission. The masters have the authority or power over their slaves, and they have all the right to enslave them. When a person is a slave, the owner does whatever he wants with him. Consequently, the slave loses his complete freedom and his humanity.

In the case of Oroonoko and the other slaves, they lose all their liberty and they are considered as “others” or outsiders who are forced to work in the plantation under the threat of violent punishment. The captors consider the slaves as barbarians, strangers, uncivilized and all; this is in order to justify the British ideology of superiority over the Africans. As a result, the captives feel that they are victims to the British power, which is based on domination. Michel Foucault says that domination is “the application of power”⁴¹. According to him, power-domination are inseparable terms, where there is power or force, there is domination. That is to say, the masters’ power enables them to control the African captives. The latter are always kept under the captors’ authority and domination.

Moreover, the author expresses her attitude towards slavery through Oroonoko's voice. Oroonoko is against his status of a slave, specifically when he discovers that his wife is pregnant. He decides to protect his race from "perpetual slavery."⁴² In short, this led him to revolt with other slaves because he becomes "more impatient of liberty."⁴³ However, the rebellion fails and Oroonoko is punished and beaten by the colonists as the author explains, "and the executioner came, and first cut off his members, and threw them into the fire; after that, with an ill-favored knife, they cut off his ears and his nose and burned them"⁴⁴. This shows the inhuman manner in which Oroonoko is punished. Behn in this quotation illustrates the white colonists' barbarity and savageness. Furthermore, the brutality of the captors is highlighted further by introducing the details of execution. She explains:

When they thought they were sufficiently Revenged on him, they untied him, almost Fainting, with loss of Blood, from a thousand Wounds all over his Body; from which they had rent his Cloths, and led him Bleeding and Naked as he was; and loaded him all over with Irons; and then rubbed his Wounds to complete their cruelty, with Indian pepper, which had like to have made him raving mad; and, in this condition made him so fast to the ground that he could not stir, if his pains and wounds would have given him leave.⁴⁵

In brief, the novel reflects Behn's own experience in the New South American colony, which was at that time under the British domination. It reflects her position towards slavery. That is to say, the author has an anti-slavery position. This is apparent when she presents the African slaves, who are tortured and imprisoned in Surinam as victims of the British enslavement. Through the protagonist Oroonoko, Behn attempts to depict the British colonists as inhuman, uncivilized and barbarians. It is important to note that, when Behn wrote her novel; she was influenced by the social and political events that spread in England around 1680's. For instance, after the restoration of the monarch, Charles II supported the idea of the Atlantic slave trade, a fact that affected her. Since this institution, based on power and domination, resembles to a certain extent the patriarchal system that kept women in a subordinate position.

In the case of *The Noble Slaves*, Aubin links the problem of captivity and slavery with the practice of piracy in the Mediterranean by the Ottoman Empire. According to John Philip Jenkins, piracy is:

Any robbery or other violent action, for private ends and without authorization by public authority, committed on the seas or in the air outside the normal jurisdiction of any state. Because piracy has been regarded as an offense against the law of nations, the public vessels of any state have been permitted to seize a pirate ship, to bring it into port, to try the crew regardless of their nationality or domicile, and, if they are found guilty, to punish them and to confiscate the ship.⁴⁶

According to this quotation, piracy can be defined as an illegal act practiced by pirates who attack the trade ship of the enemies without any authorization. Therefore, Aubin shows that the main goal of the pirates is to get profits by capturing people and selling them into slavery. In fact, during the early eighteenth century, the rapid growth of piracy menaced the system of maritime trade in the Mediterranean, and it had an impact on the European-Ottoman relationships. Aubin views the encounter between the Christians and the Muslims as being based on the relations of power and domination manifested mainly in captivity. That is to say, the Turks used power in order to impose their authority over the European captives. The dominating force of the Ottoman pirates was behind the captivity of many Europeans.

Penelope Aubin presents captivity through the “Algerine Pirate”⁴⁷ who attacked the European ships and kidnapped the western noble men and women, who are from different European countries to enslave them in the Barbary Coast. According to Mark Celinscak the Barbary Coast is “a term used to refer to the coastal regions of North Africa, which included Morocco, Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunisia. The latter were regencies or military provinces of the Ottoman Empire.”⁴⁸ During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, European powers came into close contact with the Ottoman Empire. The Barbary Coast of North Africa was an era of this contact. The European captives in North Africa were forced to slavery under the power of the Ottoman captors.

Like Behn, Penelope Aubin presents the horror of slavery through the behavior of the slave owners, who are presented in the novel as barbarians and primitive. The European captives lived in miserable conditions specifically the Christian women who were forced to sexual relations by the Ottoman governors. In fact, the owners treated Christian women as sex objects, in this sense, Linda Colley asserts that “captured women systematically became the sexual property of their owners.”⁴⁹ The author introduces this sexual threat in her narrative to present the inhuman and unethical practices of the Ottomans. According to the author, the barbarous Orientals bought the European women for sexual matters. For this reason, women were threatened to lose their virtue as Joseph Pitts describes the harsh treatment that the captive women suffered from. He says:

Although women and maidens are veiled, yet the chapmen have liberty to view their faces and to put their fingers into their mouths to feel their teeth and to feel their breasts. Further, as I have been informed, the sellers sometimes permit them in a modest way to be searched whether they are virgins or no.⁵⁰

This shows the Turks' addiction to sexual pleasure. Accordingly, Aubin represents captivity and slavery as a menace to chastity. She portrays the oriental barbarians as “sexually licentious, impious infidel.”⁵¹ She also regards slavery as the main cause of the sexual threat facing women captives in the Barbary land, where the Ottoman governor attempt to rape the Christian women captives and keep them to “his [Turks] lustful appetite.”⁵² As Aubin states: “There the Monarch gives a loose to his Passions, and thinks it no Crime to keep as many Women for his Use, as his lustful Appetite excites him to like.”⁵³ So, Penelope Aubin defines the captors as barbarians who target western women’s sexuality. It is clear from her text that the Ottomans’ governor develops tyrant sexual power over many female slaves. Thus, Penelope Aubin tends to dehumanize the Turkish masters.

In the same way, the sexual threat does not only threaten the Christian female but even the male captives. For example, one male captive narrates how a Tunisian governor makes efforts to seduce him. At the beginning, the governor treats him kindly by offering him

clothes and employing him in managing his affairs. Nevertheless, this good treatment is aimed to keep him to “a use the Mahometans often keep young Men for.”⁵⁴ Therefore, the Christian captive understands that his master “had an ill design upon me.”⁵⁵ This shows that the oriental rulers are addicted to sexuality. The captive describes his sexual coercion at the hands of his master as follows:

One Evening he called for me into his Closet, and gave me a rich Vest, Turbant, and an entire *Turkish* Dress of Satin embroidered with Silver, with Linen suitable. He bid me take it and go and dress me, for I must cease to be a Christian and a Servant, and live at ease. Then he kissed me eagerly; I turned pale, bowed, took the Clothes, and went out trembling, determining in myself to fly thence whatever was the Consequence.⁵⁶

Such a depiction of the sensuality of the oriental captors echoes Edward Said’s explanation of the western attitudes toward the Orient as “a distant region of sex, inebriants and exciting exotic experiences.”⁵⁷ That is to say, the Oriental is depicted as sensual, passive and inferior. Said adds: “The man is depicted as feminine, weak yet strangely dangerous because his sexuality poses a threat to white, western women.”⁵⁸

Moreover, Aubin expresses negative attitudes toward the Turkish masters. She describes them as uncivilized, savages and monsters as Thomas Pellow writes in his 1730’s account “the enemy seemed to me as monstrous creature, which made me cry out, I’m afraid they kill us and eat us.”⁵⁹ This shows western negative discourse about the Orient. Therefore, Aubin in her novel presents the European as “the superior race compared to the Orientals.”⁶⁰

Though she misrepresents the British slave owners, Behn associates slavery itself with Africa. It is practiced in many African tribes, and it is the most dangerous one. Thus, Behn in her narrative shows Africa as the main source for Slave Trade and a place of great traders in human traffic. She refers to Coramantien as one of the African countries that believes in slavery. Therefore, the African people are not against the institution of slavery or slave trade. The hero Oronooko believes that slavery can be honest just when it occurs in war

circumstances. So, belief in slavery facilitated the inhuman transaction to the New World. She says:

Coramantien, a country of blacks so called, was one of those places in which they found the most advantageous trading for these slaves, and thither most of our great traders in that merchandise traffic; for that nation is very warlike and brave: and having a continual campaign, being always in hostility with one neighboring prince or other, they had the fortune to take a great many captives: for all they took in battle were sold as slaves; at least those common men who could not ransom themselves. Of these slaves so taken, the general only has all the profit; and of these generals, our captains and masters of ships buy all their freights.⁶¹

Therefore, Behn proves that Oronooko is familiar with the issue of slavery. She shows that he is not against the slave trade because he sold the war captives to the European traders, with whom he had business affairs. Even Oronooko's grandfather after he discovered the relation between Oronooko and Imoinda, directly sells her into slavery without any problems.

It is the same with captivity in *The Noble Slaves*; Aubin shows that the issue of captivity and slavery existed in Britain. For instance, the Christian women: Eleonora, Charlott and Teresa before they are taken into the Barbary Coast as slaves Christian men in England have captured them. Moreover, the three women said that they find themselves in the Barbary land because they have first become the victims of European captors. In addition, the author views the threat of captivity in a Christian country as more dangerous than that of the Ottomans. For example, Teresa describes her captivity by Don Lopez's relative "in terms so moving it would have melted the hearts of Barbarians."⁶² Here Teresa uses the term "barbarians"⁶³ to mean that captivity by Christians is more dangerous because it menaces safety of the captives at home.

In order to represent the horror of captivity and slavery of the mid seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Aubin and Behn attempts to present the inhumanity and immorality of the captors. Both authors intend to show the danger of captivity and slavery that threaten the captive's essence and integrity.

Endnotes

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Chapter two: The Impact of Captivity and Slavery on the Captives in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave* (1688) and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1722).

In this chapter, we are going to highlight the impact of captivity and slavery on the captives in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave* (1688) and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1722). In fact, the captors or slave owners aim to weaken, discriminate and 'Otherise' the captives. By the use of power, the captors try to dominate them through imposing on them a different identity and culture.

The captives are exposed to physical suffering under the hard conditions of slavery both in North Africa and in colonial America. In both narratives, they are victims of brutality. During their enslavement, the slaves suffer from physical abuse; they are punished by whipping, killing or imprisonment. Women and children suffer most from violence, rape and sexual abuse. In some cases, they are punished in response to their disobedience of their masters. More than physical suffering, captivity leaves an impact on the captives' identity, culture and religion. Indeed, the identity of the captives becomes an issue, since it is threatened by the captors. The latter exercise their power upon the captives and try to reduce them to mere objects, and thus deprive them of their identity.

The concept of identity has multiple definitions or dimensions such as the social and the national identity. Socially speaking, identity is what makes an individual distinguishable and different from the rest. Shifting to the national identity, it can be considered as the person's sense of belonging to a particular nation or state. Identity, then, can be identified as "the typical features that offer the sense of belonging to an individual or share with all the members of a particular social group."⁶⁴ In addition, David Buckingham explains that: "our identity is something we uniquely possess: it is what distinguishes us from other people."⁶⁵ Bauman emphasizes that "identity only becomes an issue when it is threatened or contested in

some way and needs to be explicitly asserted.”⁶⁶ In the context of captivity, the identity of the captives becomes an issue, as it is threatened by the power of the captors.

In Behn’s narrative, the identity of Oroonoko and Imoinda is subject to the captors will. Behn, at the beginning of her narrative, gives a positive description of the African characters, before their captivity. In fact, both characters belong to noble families. Both of them are captured and transported to the New World by the British colonists and sold to slavery. Oroonoko has been a prince and a war leader in his native country. As a slave, Oroonoko finds himself in the same situation as many other slaves, although he is, according to the narrator, treated as a prince and his charming personality is much respected.

At the beginning, Aphra Behn gives Oroonoko the identity of the “noble savage,”⁶⁷ but later on, the horror of captivity in the colony, Surinam, transformed him into a barbarous, wild and brutal man. In fact, throughout the narrative, the African prince has changed from the “noble savage” into a “monster”⁶⁸ and this process is expressed in the second part of the story which carries a hidden ideology that serves the British captors’ power and disempowers Oroonoko.

In the narrative, Oroonoko’s identity is formed by people of his native land. Most of the time, Oroonoko is described positively by his fellows and even by the British colonists. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

He appear’d like some divine power descended to save his country from destruction: and his people had purposely put him on all things that might make him shine with most splendour, to strike a reverent awe into the beholders.⁶⁹

So, Oroonoko’s personality was associated with splendor and greatness. However, in the second part of her narrative, Behn depicts the romantic figures Oroonoko and Imoinda as the victims of the cruelty of slavery in colonial America, where they are forced to take another identity as Other African slaves. Although he is a royal prince, he is turned into a property

that can be owned and traded with. Oroonoko and his wife are reduced to objects by their masters who deprive them of their native identity and who employ power to impose on them a new identity. As Foucault says where there is power, there is domination. In other words, power can be defined as a form of domination. In this sense, the slave masters use their power as a form of oppression, force and abuse to dominate their slaves and uproot them from their origins.

Throughout the narrative, the captors are the dominant power in Surinam. In fact, their ideology is based on the notion that the western culture is superior and must be accepted and appreciated by the black African slaves. When the narrator associates Oroonoko with the lives of the “Romans” and Imoinda with stories of “nuns,”⁷⁰ it means that the captors are forcing their own culture upon them. In addition, when blacks are sold as slaves, they get a new “Europeanised” name since a lot of African names are hard to pronounce. Aphra Behn, in the second part of her narrative, gives her main characters other names. On the plantation, Oroonoko is known as “Caesar” and Imoinda's new name is “Clemene.”⁷¹ It seems that both of them take imposed identities, as the captors or the slave owners destroyed their native ones.

In fact, the process of destroying identity includes some degree of destroying the slaves own personalities as well as their culture to replace it with another one. The practice of renaming slaves goes with the practice of separating families; both are inhuman features of captivity and slavery. By giving the captives Christian names, the captors wants to complete their personality. In this context, Behn says: “he [Oroonoko] had nothing of barbarity in his nature, but in all points address'd himself as if his education had been in some European court”⁷² But in reality, the captors want to uproot Oroonoko and Imoinda from their culture to integrate them in their own western culture. To justify the British action, she states: “I [the author] ought to tell you, that the Christian never buy slaves but they give ‘em some name of

their own, their native ones being likely very barbarous, and hard to pronounce.”⁷³ However, for the captives, changing their names implies uprooting them from their origins.

Accordingly, the loss of identity entails the loss of culture. In this context, power can be interpreted as “cultural dominance” in the sense that the captives or the slaves are culturally dominated by their captors. In other words, the relationship between the captors and the captives can be interpreted in New Historicist terms as “power relation” that is based on “domination,” in the sense that the captors degenerate and “otherize” the captives through the unjust practices of captivity and slavery. However, in response, the enslaved captives refuse to abandon their culture and beliefs and to incorporate in the dominant culture.

Before his transportation to Surinam and his enslavement, Oroonoko realizes how his culture is important, and how it is difficult to interact with people of different origins and different cultures. Even though he is familiar with the English and traded with the slave traders before, he first experience cultural shock during his slavery. During the time of his captivity, Oroonoko is treated kindly not like any captive and such treatment demonstrates that the whites want to integrate him in their culture. The Europeans treat slaves and savages alike mainly for the assumption that Europeans are superior and represent the dominant power in the colony, Surinam, and that they have the right to impose their culture on those whom they regard as savages. The fact that Western culture is superior gives the whites the right to change the identity of the “Others” and destroy their native culture.

Similarly, in Penelope Aubin’s *The Noble Slaves* (1722), the Christian white captives also suffer from the horrors of captivity in North Africa. To some extent, they are forced by their masters to convert to Islam and adopt Islamic/Turkish culture. To argue, Eve Trevor Banet says that “*The Noble Slaves* bore in an immediately topical issue: the great number of the Christians at this time expected to return to Europe, redeemed from the hands of those

cruel infidels [on the Barbary Coast] amongst whom our Noble Slaves suffered so much.”⁷⁴
This act of conversion has an effect on the captives’ identity.

Throughout our reading of Aubin’s narrative, we have noticed that most of the noble slaves are Spanish noblemen and ladies who are full of qualities and fortune “a youth of great hopes, quality and fortunes.”⁷⁵ However, during their captivity, the captives lose their identity and social status of nobles and become slaves and mistresses. The white women are separated from their husbands and become under control of the barbarians. Therefore, this separation pushes them to look for many ways to preserve their honor, beauty, virtue as well as their culture to escape from the barbarians’ hands.

Under slavery and the cruelty of their masters, the European female captives are exposed to different cultures in the Barbary Coast, a fact which affect negatively their “morality, sexual purity, national identity and civility.”⁷⁶ In fact, the culture of the Turks of Algiers is based on harem culture. However, the Western women captives reject the harem customs that greatly influenced their culture and identity in the Barbary lands. Originally, the captives are from different nations with different life histories and different voyages in and across the Atlantic where they meet and exchange stories before their captivity.⁷⁷ Thus Aubin adopts the seventeenth century romance technique of having every new character introduce himself by recounting his own life and presenting his adventure in the Atlantic world.⁷⁸ The captives share the same adventures of captivity and face the same threat of losing their culture

To explain further, the captives in *The Noble Slaves* are mostly affected in their culture. The captives are forced to disguise in foreign dress to escape slavery. Emilia and Teresa cover themselves by wearing the Turkish dress for seven months. It is the same case for their husbands who disguise themselves in Greek costumes because they think that their ability to speak Greek will protect them from the barbarity of their masters. In fact, clothes is

a part of culture and dressing represents one's culture and identity, "clothes are expressions of identity, one of the perennial means whereby we signal to the social world who and what we are; they are part of our repertoire of social technology, a means whereby ideas of identity are grounded in the visual."⁷⁹ But in this case, the white captives wear foreign dress in order to protect themselves from the Turks, and the harsh practices of slavery.

In both narratives, captivity influences the captives' beliefs and threatens their religion. During the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, captivity was widely practiced both by the Christians and the Barbary pirates who enslaved each other. However, in the case of *Oroonoko*, the British captors emphasize Christianity and western moral values over the African slaves. In this context, they try to prove that Christianity is a sacred religion which goes with civilization.

Throughout Behn's narrative, one can understand that the captors introduce us the civilized world of the European Christians and describe the enslaved Africans as barbarians, inferior without culture and religion. In fact, characters, throughout the fictional narrative stand as representatives of these two worlds, the East and the West and it is through their actions and convictions that the African captives stand against the dishonor of Christians and their oppression to convert to their religion. Religious conversion means to exclude or abandon one's religion and affiliate with another that can be made by conviction or force. However, in the case of *The Noble Slaves*, it is a forced conversion.

In Behn's narrative, the captives and the slaves who are miserably treated by their barbarous captors are forced to abandon their convictions and convert to Christianity. In fact, Oroonoko's faith is based on the notion of innate goodness and honor without the necessity of religion. Behn claims that the Christian notion of God is his least favorite subject when he speaks with the other slaves, and she concludes that "one could not make him [Oroonoko]

understand what faith was.”⁸⁰ However, despite his lack of faith in God, he is convinced of his innate goodness and honor. It is evident that much emphasis is put on an innate sense of virtue as opposed to the superficial virtues of Christians, who have a consistent disregard for honor throughout this narrative.

In addition, Oroonoko makes his strongest statements against the Christian notion of honor when he is encouraging the other slaves to rise up against the oppression of their owners and their savage behavior. Indeed, Oroonoko compares the civilized Christians to animals: “Shall we [Oroonoko and the African slaves] render obedience to such a degenerate race, who have no one human virtue left to distinguish them from the vilest creatures.”⁸¹ Therefore, despite the religious rules on which the civilized society is based, the British captors are considered to be at the level of animals, even less civilized than those they consider as barbarians.

In addition, throughout the narrative, the enslaved prince criticizes his enemy’s religion and those who supposedly practice it. He states that “no people profess’d so much, none performed so little.”⁸² In this context, he shows that the civilized Christians may have a formal set of morals and virtues in their religion, but the “uncivilized barbarians” have also their proper sense of honor that Oroonoko considers as a part of his culture. He claims that slaves are “whipped into the knowledge of the Christian gods to be the vilest of all creeping things, to learn to worship such deities as had not power to make them just, brave or honest.”⁸³ From this quotation, we understand that Oroonoko wants to condemn the attempt of the captors to teach the captives’ Christianity that he considers as source of vice.

So, it is obvious that Behn’s *Oroonoko* is clearly pointing out that the sense of honor and virtue of Christianity is different from that of the African slaves. In fact, this notion is shown through the beliefs and the actions of the characters in the narrative; for instance, the

author introduces the dishonor of the Christian characters, and the honorable actions of non-Christian characters, particularly Oroonoko himself. Yet, the captives especially Oroonoko and Imoinda face recently the attempts of the Christian masters to make them Christian.

Similarly Aubin presents the impact of captivity on religion; *The Noble Slaves* presents the clash between Christian European and Muslim North Africa. In other words, throughout her narrative, Penelope Aubin expresses the ideological tensions between Islam and Christianity. In fact, she gives a stereotypical view about the Muslims of the Barbary Coast. She portrays the Muslims as barbarians, monsters, savages and cannibals, and she describes Islam as a religion against freedom, equality and democracy, in contrast to Christianity. So, these stereotypical images are set to demonstrate the Christians' superiority over Islam in general and the Muslims in particular. However, the latter threaten Christianity, since they attempt to impose Islamic Faith on the Christian captives.

It is noticeable that the inhuman practices of captivity and slavery of the Barbary pirates towards the white captives affected the latter's religion in the sense that they are forced to convert to Islam. According to Paul Baepler "...Barbary captivity narratives predictably emphasized the victimization of the Christian and the inhumanity of the non-Christian."⁸⁴ That is to say, the captives in *The Noble Slaves* are depicted as victims of Muslim brutality, since they are Christians. Yet, despite the Muslim masters' attempts to convert them, the Christian captives' belief on Christian religion seems unshakable. Emile Durkheim states: "a religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices ..."⁸⁵ In this context, Aubin says that "the providence of god, which men so seldom confide in, is in this history highly vindicated; his power manifests itself in every passage: and if we are not bettered by the examples of the virtuous Teresa and the brave Don Lopez, it is our faults."⁸⁶ So, one can understand that Aubin's narrative exposes the Christian superiority as all her characters put their trust in God to save them from the barbarity of the Turks. According to the captives, the belief in God

sustains a person in the hardest times; for instance, Anna is united with her lover, she says: “learn to trust in Providence.” And Don Lopez states: “I thank there, gracious Heaven, my Vows are heard: if I returned in safety with her [Teresa] to my home, I will build a church, and consecrate it to the Honor of our God.”⁸⁷ However, despite their convictions, they face a dangerous threat targets their religion. This threat is conversion.

In fact, the Christian captives regard Islam as a great danger that threatens Christianity in the sense that they consider it a religion which hates the Western values of democracy, equality and freedom. In Aubin’s narrative, the slave owners are represented as people without faith. In fact, the Christian captives describe the prophet Mohammed as a false prophet. In this sense, the Westerners view Islam “as a false system of belief founded by a false prophet, [it] was demonized as the dark and yet seductive and attractive other to Christianity...”⁸⁸

In addition, the sexual practices of the barbarous Ottomans mostly affect the white women captives’ religion. Penelope Aubin presents the notion of sexual virtue in her narrative as a means for women to protect themselves and to preserve their faith from the Oriental savages. In this context, Teresa states: “if we must perish on the sea, or wander in the strange lands. It is better we should be married, my honor is so secured.”⁸⁹ That is to say, it is better to marry to secure one’s honor than become any man’s mistress or “concubine” and then change nationality, race and mainly religion. The female characters prefer marriage to secure their culture, religion and identity in general and their honor in particular, rather than being raped by the powerful infidels of North Africa.

As a conclusion, the characters in the two narratives suffer from the impacts of captivity and slavery that targeted their identity, culture as well as their religion. In fact, the threat of losing identity resulted from the confrontation with “other cultures”. That is to say,

the exposure to an “Other’s” identity forced the captives to lose their identity and their origins. In short, the captives are exposed to the threat of religious conversion. The dominant power, the captors, forces the enslaved captives to integrate in their culture.

Endnotes

⁶⁴Oxford dictionary, 126.

⁶⁵David. Buckingham, *Youth, Identity and Digital Media: Introducing Identity* (institute of education, university of London, centre for the study of children, youth and Media, 2008), 1.

⁶⁶Ibid, 2.

⁶⁷Aphra. Behn, *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave*. (London: 2007), 183

⁶⁸ Ibid, 197

⁶⁹Ibid, 152

⁷⁰Ibid, 192.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Aphra. Behn, *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave*. (London: 2007), 153.

⁷³Ibid, 186

⁷⁴Eve Trevor. Banet, *Transatlantic Stories and the History of Reading, 1720-1810: Migrant Fictions* (Cambridge university press: Amazon France), 49: [Online] available: <https://books.google.dz>. (Accessed on the 22nd September 2016).

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Penelope. Aubin, *The Noble Slaves*, 12.

⁷⁸Alexis. McQuigge, *Resisting Transculturation: The European Woman in English Travel Writing* (University of Waterloo: Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2013), 2.

⁷⁹Twigg. Julia, *Clothing, Age and the Body: A Critical Review*. [Online] available:

[http:// www.Kent. Ac. Uk/Spsr/ Academic/ Twigg/ Clothing-Age Body Pdf](http://www.Kent.Ac.Uk/Spsr/Academic/Twigg/Clothing-Age Body Pdf) (Accessed on 7th August 2016)

⁸⁰Aphra. Behn, *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave*, 192.

⁸¹Ibid, 207.

⁸²Ibid, 212

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Paul. Baepler, *Barbary Captivity Narrative in American Culture* (University of Minnesota), 220.

⁸⁵Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. (New York: The free Press Simon& Schuster, 1995 -1912), 39-44.

⁸⁶Penelope. Aubin, *The Noble Slaves*, 7.

⁸⁷Ibid, 12.

⁸⁸ Diane Long. Hoeveler and Jeffrey. Cass, *Interrogating Orientalism: Contextual Approaches and Pedagogical Practices* (Amazon France: Ohio State University Press, 2006), 47. [Online] in: <https://books.google.dz/books?id=txeSWRJM4YgC&pg=PT54&lpg=PT54&dq>. (Accessed 3rd August 2016).

⁸⁹Penelope. Aubin, *The Noble Slaves*, 17.

Chapter three: Subversive Strategies in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave* (1688) and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1722).

In this chapter, we are going to present how the dominating captors exercise their power on the captives. These marginalized people rebel against their slavery and the system of slavery. Therefore, the captives are not passive; they answer back the captors' domination and power using a counter-power. By using subversive strategies as escape, rebellion and disobedience, the captives try to get rid of their suffering. These strategies are considered as responses against the domination of the captors.

In *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave* Behn shows that Oroonoko's subversive voice first appears in Coromantin, his native country. He struggles against his native culture, which impose on him several values that work like scripts to limit and shape his actions. For instance, Oroonoko resists both his grandfather's power over him and the beliefs of his ancestors. When his grandfather decides to possess Imoinda, he puts on her the veil which means that Imoinda is "secured for the king's use and 'tis death to disobey; besides, held a most impious disobedience."⁹⁰ By this, Imoinda becomes the king's wife. Although Oroonoko is against this cultural costume of the "Royal Veil,"⁹¹ he is obliged to show respect to this tradition and especially to his grandfather. Therefore, this led to Oroonoko's misery.

After a long resistance to his grandfather and to his village customs, Oroonoko decides to break the laws. He concludes that he can gain Imoinda only by escaping customs through an illegal act. That is to say, Oroonoko and Imoinda engage in a hidden relation. When the old king discovers the relation between them, he becomes angry, and he decides to punish them for their crime. Therefore, Imoinda was sold to the English ship and taken to Surinam as a slave, and the prince Oroonoko is told that she is killed. In fact, Oroonoko's rebellion against the King fails due to the king's power.

Moreover, resistance to slavery had a long history with the Africans who were taken as slaves to Europe through the Slave Trade. Many Africans took opposition against the transatlantic slave trade. They were against the transporting of human beings to the New World. Therefore, as a captive in Surinam, Oroonoko, the main character rebels against the unjust system of slavery. His rebellion is regarded as a natural reaction against the harsh conditions that the captives face during their enslavement. Oroonoko sees that the revolt is the most obvious method to save the slaves from eternal slavery. Therefore, the narrative is described as “a unique form of resistance in the recorded history of the institution of commercial slavery”⁹². Then, rebellion is seen as a subversive way to eliminate the captives’ suffering.

Before the rebellion, Oroonoko attempts to establish his freedom through legal means, but he fails because of the false promise that he was given by his master; he is promised to gain his freedom and return to Africa. So, the false promise led him to organize a rebellion against the inhumanity and the barbarity of the British colonists. He reunites the other slaves of the plantation and he starts the revolt. In his famous speech, Oroonoko calls the others to revolt and struggle against slavery demanding their right of liberty:

My dear friends and fellow-sufferers, should we be slaves to an unknown people? Have they vanquished us nobly in fight? Have they won us in honorable battle? And are we by the chance of war become their slaves? This would not anger a noble heart; this would not animate a soldiers’ soul: no, but we are bought and sold like apes or monkeys, to be the sport of women, fools, and cowards; and the support of rogues and runagates, that have abandoned their own countries for rapine, murders, theft, and villainies. Do you not hear every day how they upbraid each other with infamy of life, below the wildest savages? And shall we render obedience to such a degenerate race, who have no one human virtue left, to distinguish them from the vilest creatures? Will you, I say, suffer the lash from such hands?” They all replied with one accord, “No, no, no; Caesar has spoken like a great captain, like a great king.”⁹³

In this case, Oroonoko and his followers face the power of the captors with the power of disobedience. This counter power is meant to help them to change their situation and act against the inhuman system of slavery.

However, the power of the British masters control the slaves and do not allow them to work hand in hand for their liberation. For this, Behn states:

There the merchants and gentlemen of the country going on board to demand those lots of slaves they had already agreed on, and, amongst those, the overseers of those plantations where I then chanced to be, the captain, who had given the word, ordered his men to bring up those noble slaves in fetters whom I have spoken of, and having put `em, some in one, and some in other lots with women and children (which they call piccaninnies), they sold`em off as slaves to several merchants and gentlemen, not putting any two in one lot, because they would separate `em far from each other, not daring to trust `em together, lest rage and courage should put `em upon contriving some great action to the ruin of the colony.⁹⁴

By separating the slaves from one another, the English colonists succeed to “contain” the subversion of the slaves. In fact, the rebellion fails and the English colonists defeat Oroonoko. This defeat is due to the English governor’s ideology. He used to cry out during the fighting “Yield, and live! Yield and be pardoned.”⁹⁵ When the slaves heard these words, they all run to their husbands and fathers crying out “Yield! And leave Caesar to their revenge.”⁹⁶ So, Oroonoko is abandoned and left alone in the battlefield by the slaves who are given a false promise. After that, Oroonoko’s violent struggle against the British ends. Consequently, the power of the British colonists leads to the end of Oroonoko’s revolt.

Before dying, Oroonoko uses violent means of “resistance” against his family. So, before he kills himself, he kills his wife to save her from being “ravished”⁹⁷ by the slave owners and he kills his unborn child in order to save him from “perpetual slavery”⁹⁸ as Charlotte Sussman said “by murdering Imoinda, Oroonoko in fact resisted the possibility of his child’s being born in an alienated or foreign setting.”⁹⁹ Therefore, the captives, Oroonoko and Imoinda are defeated both at home in Coramantien and abroad in the New World. This

defeat is the result of the powerful domination of their masters and the latter's strategy of "containment".

Resistance to power occurs also in Aubin's narrative. In *The Noble Slaves*, Aubin shows that the resistance of the white Christians first starts in the Mediterranean Sea when the Algerian pirates attacked the Christian ships. The whites resist to the attack, and they are not captured easily. Aubin states:

The wind began to blow hard, and drove them on the Coast of Barbary. Here two Pirates of Algiers came up with them, and soon gave them to understand who they were, by firing at them, and summoning them to surrender; they made all the defense they were able, but, alas! the ship was heavy laden, their hands and guns few: howsoever, the Captain was very brave, and Don Lopez and the Count de Hautville assisting, they resisted the Turks, till such time as the grappling irons having hold of the vessel the cruel infidels boarded it, and entered in such numbers as obliged the poor Christians to retire into the great cabin, which the Turks broke into sword in hand.¹⁰⁰

So, the white Christians do not yield easily to the power of the pirates; they resist the power of the Ottomans.

Moreover, Aubin demonstrates that the Christian women are threatened to lose their virtue. Therefore, in order to preserve it, they adopt violent strategies either against their masters or against themselves. The captives resist the power abuse of the dominant captors, throughout all the narrative. The case of the enslaved Maria, the Spanish slave, is a good example. She adopts a violent strategy against the Persian Emperor, her ravisher, as she tells: "I tore my eyeballs out and threw them at him".¹⁰¹ That is to say, Maria sacrifices herself and loses her eyes to protect herself. In this context, she says:

My Lord, said she, start not at the sight, my eyes are sacrificed to Virtue, with the Loss of them I have procured your Happiness; I would have done more, had Christianity permitted, and would have died, but I have cheaply bought my Repose with the Loss of one Sense.¹⁰²

Moreover, another female captive preferred to die rather than to be raped by the Turks she says: "I will die rather than live a Vassal to a vile Mahometan's unlawful lust."¹⁰³ This

shows that Aubin's heroines prefer to die rather than to be ravished by the “infidel.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, the Christian captives chose death rather than submitting to the Ottoman masters. They are more violent against those aggressors, who want to rape them. Joe Snader states: “Aubin's fictions nevertheless repeatedly depict the strange actions of female violence as justified resistance to the subjugation of Oriental slavery.”¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, in order to facilitate their escape, the captives become more savage. Teresa and Emilia, two Christian women, are captured by the Ottoman pirates and taken into the sultan's harem; they faced nearly the same situation of sexual assaults as Maria. Teresa and Emilia are put on two different chambers with a Turkish dress in waiting the sultan's coming. Later on, when the governor enters Emilia's chamber, she kills him. She said “Villain, I fear you not, I will sacrifice you to preserve my virtue; die infidel, and tell your blasphemous Prophet, when you come to hell, a Christian spilt your Blood”¹⁰⁶. Emilia's violence against Selim prevents the sexual assault on both women.

In addition, in her way to see Emilia, Teresa was terrified by seeing Selim “lying on the bed, weltering in his blood,”¹⁰⁷ she is choked by Emilia's behavior. These acts show the power that the captives employ to defend themselves against their aggressors. Joe Snader states: “Western captives possess a natural right and ability to resist and control the alien cultures that have enslaved them”¹⁰⁸. Later, the two ladies disguise themselves in foreign dress and escape through the garden. Thus, the captives refuse to submit to their masters; they do not accept the new way of life that is imposed on them, and they use violence to resist.

Despite the fact that the Christian women are ignored, marginalized and considered as sex objects, they show their subversion by refusing their masters' orders in respect to their own culture, identity and religion. In fact, In *The Noble Slaves*, Aubin shows that the Christian women have power to resist the ottomans' dominance. That is to say, power does not belong only to the dominant part, but even to the subordinate one. Michel Foucault says, in this context, “power does not belong to one specific group, who are imposing it on another

group but it is disseminated through individuals.”¹⁰⁹ In the case of the narrative, power is not only in the hand of the Ottoman masters, but it is even in the hands of the Christian captives who use it individually to resist. Here subversive acts as a means of counter power for the captives.

To conclude, Both the European and African captives adopt strategies of resistance against slavery. This resistance appears in the two narratives through rebellion and escape. To put it differently, the captives, either the Westerners or the Easterners in order to eliminate their suffering and return home resist the power of their captors. The captives choose subversion instead of submission. So, as captives, they decide to take measures to put an end to their enslavement. The slaves meet power with a “counter power” to overthrow the captors’ dominance. This power enables them either to escape or commit suicide.

Endnotes

⁹⁰Aphra, Behn. *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave*, 6.

⁹¹Ibid, 6.

⁹²Ahmad, Munawar Iqbal. *Revisiting Aphra Behn’s Treatment of Slavery: a Postcolonial Study* (Department of English, International Islamic University Islamabad) 2588, 2014.

⁹³Aphra, Behn. *Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave*, 26.

⁹⁴Ibid, 16.

⁹⁵Ibid, 27.

⁹⁶Ibid, 27.

⁹⁷Ibid, 10.

⁹⁸Ibid, 26.

⁹⁹Ahmad, Munawar Iqbal. *Revisiting Aphra Behn’s Treatment of Slavery: a Postcolonial Study* (Department of English, International Islamic University Islamabad) 2588, 2014.

¹⁰⁰Penelope, Aubin. *The Noble Slaves*, 18.

¹⁰¹Ibid, 15.

¹⁰²Ibid, 15.

¹⁰³Ibid, 18.

¹⁰⁴bid, 6.

¹⁰⁵Joe, Snader. *The Oriental Captivity Narrative and Early English Fiction* (University of Maryland), 294.

¹⁰⁶Penelope, Aubin. *The Noble Slaves*, 20.

¹⁰⁷Ibid, 20.

¹⁰⁸Joe, Snader. *The Oriental Captivity Narrative and Early English Fiction* (University of Maryland), 268.

¹⁰⁹Mahdi, Sepehrmanesh. *A New Historicist Reading of August Wilson's Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics) 214, 2015.

IV. Conclusion

Throughout this humble study, we have tried to examine how the issue of captivity exposed identity both religious and cultural to the threat of the “Other” in the two captivity narratives: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave* (1688) and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1772). After a close reading of the two narratives, we have concluded that the encounter between the Europeans and the Africans led to captivity and slavery in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. We have relied on New Historicist principles that insist on the interpretation of literary works according to their historical context. We have also encoded the concepts of discourse, power domination and subversion within the New Historicism. These concepts refer to the relationships between the captors and the captives.

After approaching the two works from a New Historicist perspective, we come to conclude that *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* and *The Noble Slaves* reflect many historical events of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the first chapter entitled the representation of captivity and slavery in both narratives, we have concluded that both authors present Slavery and Captivity in the same way, as inhuman institutions. In both narratives, the authors present how the captives either the Africans or the Europeans suffer from the atrocity of captivity and slavery. Behn and Aubin use the same discourse that reflect power domination in depicting the captives' suffering and the captors' dominance.

In the second chapter that deal with the impact of captivity and slavery on the captives in the two narratives, we have reached the conclusion that captivity and slavery have great effects on the captive's identity, culture and religion. The captives are threatened to lose their native identity due to the encounter with the “Other.” The captors forced the captives to adopt their culture and religion that destruct their own ones. Both authors present how the

captors use their abuse power over the captives to impose on them their own culture, identity and religion.

In the last chapter, subversion in *Oroonoko or, the Royal Slave. A True History* and *The Noble Slaves*, we have concluded that after a long-suffering from power abuse and dominance, the captives adopt strategies to resist the threat of the captors, such as escape and rebellion. These strategies are meant to preserve themselves and their culture. In other words, the captives encounter the power of the masters with counter power.

Finally, the topic of our dissertation deals with captivity and identity in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave (1688)* and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves (1722)* from new historicist perspective. This topic, then, is still an interesting subject that needs further investigation. It can be treated in another way using other perspectives. This can be done, for example; through focusing on the representation of women in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slaves (1688)* and Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves (1772)*.

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