

Culture Shock in Barbary Captivity Narratives

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Abstract :

My research paper studies the culture shock in Barbary captivity narratives. This paper shows that the narratives are experiences of a passage, the crossing of a boundary that allows for an encounter with otherness to take place. Being cut out from their culture, the captives were at a complete loss since their host culture involved different norms of cultural understanding such as, religion, food, clothing, gender roles, and traditions. The captives refused to adjust in the host culture through the rejection of these norms because, according to them, they threaten their identity.

Keywords: Algiers; American Captives; Barbary Captivity Narratives; Culture Shock.

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1. Introduction

For centuries in America, the Barbary captivity narrative has filtered through religious and popular literature reaching millions of readers in various forms, nonfiction, fiction, drama and film. The figure of the white slave in Africa produced some of the first and long-lasting images of North Africans for the American audience. From the eighteenth century up to the Civil War, a surprising number of Barbary captivity narratives were published. They were not only among the most popular of captivity narratives but also provided Americans with powerful images of slavery. Barbary narratives paved the way to countless books which dealt with the clash of the captives' home culture and the host one. These narratives are the experiences of a passage, the crossing of a boundary that allows for an encounter with otherness to take place. Addressed to their home culture, the narratives dealt mainly with the captives' culture shock upon their first encounter with national cultures strikingly different from that of imprisoning host nations¹.

According to Paul BAEPLER, the first Barbary captivity by an American captivity entitled "Narrative" was passed by Joshua Gee, a shipwright turned into a tobacco trader seized by Algerian privateers just three years after Mary Rowlandson's redemption from Indian captivity, and her publication of her captivity account "The Sovereignty and Goodness of God" in 1682. Being essentially anti-generic, another captivity account comes out in Cotton Mather's sermon "The Glory of Goodness" (1703)². Among the Barbary States which held American slaves, Algiers emerged as the most powerful country, where these captivity narratives took place. According to Osman Benchérif's *The Image of Algeria in the Early Anglo-American Writing* (1984), Algiers naval captivity reached its zenith during the first half of the seventeenth century when the Algerian corsairs' vessels, already active in the Mediterranean, broke out into the Atlantic. Algiers became powerful and synonymous with Muslim piracy and enslavement. A significant number of captives left accounts of their experience

and life in Barbary³. Virtually, they all follow the same pattern: capture by the corsairs, persecution within slavery followed by their freedom. They provided valuable information on corsair Algiers and on the conditions of Christian captives reduced to servitude in Algiers and the circumstances of their return to freedom, the whole narrative being generally interspersed with the social organisation and the economy of the country⁴.

Much has already been written about the ethnographic point of view from which captivity and travel narratives were composed. However, so far little attention has been devoted to the impact of the cultural crisis or cultural shock on the compositions of the ethnographic elements in these captivity accounts. Culture Shock as a common experience for persons encountering another culture in differing contexts has received various definitions. For Peter Adler, cultural shock is “a form of anxiety that results from the loss of commonly perceived and understood signs and symbols of social intercourse”⁵. This anxiety is accompanied by four major mechanisms: repression, regression, isolation and rejection at whose basis is a feeling of a disorienting insecurity due to the removal of familiar cultural guidelines. George M Foster (1962) goes even further than Adler by comparing cultural shock to a “mental illness”. The victim of cultural shock just as the mentally ill, he claims, “usually does not know that he is afflicted”⁶.

As far as this research is concerned, cultural shock will be taken as one of the four stages of acculturation. The first stage is the period of excitement and euphoria at both the personal and national levels. America was still in the euphoric stage of celebrating its nationhood when its representative citizens were seized as captives. The second stage of acculturation, cultural shock emerges when the individual captives and America were overwhelmed by another culture whose differences threaten with destruction the newly acquired and fragile identities. The democratic image of nation and self that America was in the process of celebrating was suddenly put at peril without being able of defending it

militarily and diplomatically. The two other stages of acculturation, cultural stress and cultural adaptation, are not important in this research since it is concerned primarily with the impact and the inflection that the narratives under study received as a result of cultural shock in coming face to face with a strikingly different culture. The social distance between the American culture and the Algerian culture was too large at the time of contact for the American captives writing under conditions of enslavement to write objectively about the host culture.

2. Culture Shock

Whenever an American moves overseas, he suffers from a condition known as **“culture shock.”** Culture shock is simply a removal or distortion of many of the familiar cues one encounters at home and the substitution for them of other cues which are strange. A good deal of what occurs in the organization and use of space provides important leads as to the specific cues responsible for culture shock⁷.

These are the words Edward T. Hall in *The Silent Language* (1959), analysing the situation of any American who moves from his community to embrace another one with new cultural norms. He claims that, *“our senses are bombarded by a strange language, different smells, and gestures, as well as a host of signs and symbols. However, the fact that those who have been in a foreign country for some time talk about these things provides the newcomer with advance warning.”*⁸What happens to the American captives is called **“Culture Shock”**. To understand this **“Culture shock”** one has to look how it is defined by cultural anthropologists such as Edward Hall. The latter defines it as *“the way of life of a people, [consists] of the sum of their learned behaviour patterns, attitudes, and material things.”*⁹Culture is not one thing, but many, where no one basic unit or elemental particle, is isolate for all culture¹⁰.

As emphasized by cultural anthropologists, Man is culture bound. In this regard, Hall writes: *"The one thing that is quite clear is that man is bound as long as he remains ignorant of the nature of the hidden pathways culture provides for him."*¹¹ However, Hall argues that though Man is culture bound: *"Man did not evolve culture as a means of smothering himself but as a medium in which to move, live, breathe, and develop his own uniqueness. In order to exploit it he needs to know much more about it"*¹². Thus, culture creates links between human beings and helps their interaction with others¹³. Moving across other cultures is another matter for it often leads to cultural shock that Peter Adler defines, *"a form of anxiety that results from the loss of commonly perceived and understood signs and symbols of social intercourse [...] disoriented, afraid of, and alienated from the things that he knows and understands"*¹⁴. This study is actually intended to show that this cultural shock comes out in the misconception of the cultural aspects in Algiers where they were imprisoned. Being separated from their home culture, the captives were confronted with different culture which involved unusual norms of cultural understanding such as, religion, food, clothing, gender roles, customs and traditions. The cultural differences between the captives and their Algerian masters were so huge that no captive seem to have transcended the first phase of the cultural shock that Hall details in the following quote:

In the cross-cultural situation the first thing that a person will learn about another society is the existence of certain formal sets. These are either pointed out right away or they are so obvious that they cannot be missed. Yet in many cases the newcomer never gets beyond this first step¹⁵.

One of the first marks of this cultural shock is the superiority that the American captives claimed over their masters. This paper is principally concerned with the cultural encounter in captivity narratives. An anthropological framework will be adopted, since two communities will be compared. In *The Silent Language* (1959), Hall states that *"what I am dealing with here are the various ways in which*

societies and their components are organized or structured”¹⁶. This study will take inspiration from Edward Hall’s *The Silent Language*. The silent language in Hall’s book refers to the culture that underlies the voiced language. According to him, culture determines behaviour in our life, though we are

not conscious of the elaborate patterning of behavior which prescribes our handling of time, our spatial relationships, our attitudes toward work, play, and learning. In addition to what we say with our verbal language we are constantly communicating our real feelings in our silent language-the language of behavior. Sometimes this is correctly interpreted by other nationalities, but more often it is not¹⁷.

Collen Ward in *The Psychology of Culture Shock* (2005) states that the effective intercultural interactions are often hampered by the fact that participants are unaware of the subtle, culturally-defined rules and regulations that govern social encounters¹⁸. The captives were shocked and disoriented because they were culture bound. So, instead of trying to understand the culture of their hosts, they reacted very strongly against it, especially in their conditions as “slaves”, or prisoners. The captivity narratives remind us of what Samuel Huntington writes in *The Clash of Civilisations* (1993):

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future¹⁹.

Huntington’s theory principally revolves around the clash between the civilisations of “the West” and “Islam”, recognising the “bloody borders” between Islamic and non-Islamic civilisations. By constructing North Africa as monstrous, Americans were able to portray their country as just and honourable. The way in

which Americans view the Barbary powers, therefore, allowed the young republic to construct itself as a free nation. The idea of the American identity as superior to that of the Barbary States allowed America to claim the civilising mission. Although America did not go on to colonise North Africa, it did inherit the European views of imperial expansion. Beyond embodying the problems facing Americans, the captivity narratives offer a story of American strength, endurance and even prosperity. They persistently explore cultural changes, divisions, and differences occasioned by the captives' cultural crossings. In telling a different story structured on different cultural values (food, clothes, religion, gender roles, and customs and traditions), the narrators portray the host culture as not only different from the one left at home, but also inferior and exotic :

Contact between culturally diverse individuals is as old as recorded history. People brought up in one culture have always visited other societies to trade with, learn from, or exert influence in foreign lands. Most societies have experienced visitors from abroad, welcoming them if their motives were seen to be benevolent, or resisting the newcomers if they came to invade, pillage, or exploit²⁰.

In The Declaration of Independence (1776) in which Americans attempted to shake off the yoke of the British "Leviathan", Thomas Jefferson proclaims : *"we hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable right; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"*²¹. The fact of being created equal and free did not imply the right of living so within the Barbary Captivity. As already mentioned, during the eighteenth century, a large number of Americans were captured by the Algerian Barbary pirates and "enslaved" in Algiers, where they experienced lots of hardship. It is often argued that crossing cultures entails travellers' entrance into different sets of languages, rituals, and institutions, making identities as discursive practices. The captives' plight was due to the fact the captives felt assaulted in their sense of identity, of who they are and their

newly gained dignity as citizens. Their experience of captivity and crossing cultures occasioned their revision of identities and of the culture that constitutes them. The American saw liberty as individualistic and natural concept giving every human being the right of exercising his will in a free society²².

3. Culture Shock in Customs and Traditions

Influenced by the ideas of Enlightenment, the Americans built their nation, shaking off what they inherited from the British to give birth to their “Imagined Community”²³. This community was built thanks to the initiative of people who believed in the concept of freedom based upon an autonomous human subject who is capable of acting in a conscious manner²⁴. Peskin Lawrence argues that “*the new nation was a product of the very Enlightenment-era liberalism that Jurgen Habermas found so necessary for the development of what he termed the “bourgeois”, or liberal ,public sphere”*²⁵. According to Alexander Hamilton “*In its simplest sense the Enlightenment was the creation of a new framework of ideas about man, society and nature, which challenged existing conception rooted in a traditional world-view, dominated by Christianity*”²⁶. Empirical observation, reason and science are major themes of the Enlightenment project. It was the Age of Reason during the second half of the eighteenth century. This contrasting picture of America as a chosen land and Algiers as a dark place shows in their attitude in religion. In *The Sacred and the Profane* (1957) Mercia Eliade argues:

Modern nonreligious man assumes a new existential situation; he regards himself solely as the subject and agent of history, and he refuses all appeal to transcendence. In other words, he accepts no model for humanity outside the human condition as it can be seen in the various historical situations. Man makes himself, and he only makes himself completely in proportion as he desacralizes himself and the world. The sacred is the prime obstacle to his freedom. He will become himself only when he is totally demysticized. He will not be truly free until he has killed the last god²⁷.

Instead of a God-ordained society, Americans “*spoke of reason; instead of regarding sin as inherent in man, they pinned their faith to human perfectibility and believed that education could be the human personality*”²⁸. The “Algerines” are seen as Primitive people, who undertake to attain a religious ideal and attempt to imitate mythic models. They believe that everything is predestined by God. In this way, they show a faith in the power of human beings to eradicate misery and eventually create happiness. It is this point of view that William Shaler in *Sketches of Algiers* (1984) makes when he writes the following about Algiers: “*the destiny of every man was indelibly imprinted by the hand of Allah upon his front*”²⁹. In his turn, Mercia Eliade writes that the religious makes himself by approaching the divine models. In such affirmations, one can understand that the American captives viewed themselves as superior than the Algerians. They view themselves as agents in history whereas the Algerians are viewed as passive and victims of their cultural systems³⁰.

This spirit of American exceptionalism manifests itself in the captivity narrative of John Foss who believes that the United States’ government and citizenry serve as idealistic templates for the rest of the world to emulate. The slaves exclaimed that though they are slaves, they are gentlemen, “*the American people must be the best in the world to be so human and generous to their countrymen in slavery*”³¹. Foss’s perceptions of Americans, after his experiences with the inhabitants of Algiers, harken back the stereotypes that preachers in the United States were establishing for generations. The captives view themselves as the defenders of a democratic ideal³². An American in Tripoli observes: “*how delightful it was to see the stars and stripes holding forth the hand of retributive justice to the barbarians, and rescuing the unfortunate, even of distant but friendly European nation from slavery*”³³. In Barbary, the white captives found themselves in contexts that necessitated a revision of the discourses of knowledge

and the identity of white society. Like Foss, James Leander Cathcart connects his imprisonment to that of the American nation: *"I was convinced that the honor of our country was connected with our redemption"*³⁴. The USA at that time lacked direct diplomatic means to negotiate the captives' release. The United States was very sensitive to the captivity of their citizens because it had just won its independence from Britain. The fact that it could not protect its citizens was felt as a shame. In this sense, Cathcart writes:

Why are we left the victims of arbitrary power and barbarous despotism, in a strange land far distant from all our connections, miserable exiles from the country of which we have fought, forgotten by our co(n)temporaries who formerly used to animate us in all our expedition with tales of liberty³⁵.

Studying the silent language of culture, Hall comments on the notion of time by saying that the Americans not only schedule time, but look ahead towards the future³⁶. They are preoccupied with change and want to know how to overcome resistance to change. According to him, time is handled much like a material, and somewhat immoral to have two things going on at the same time. He further asserts that *"there are those, of a psychological bent, who would say that we are obsessed with time [....] We have stressed this aspect of culture and developed it to a point unequalled anywhere in the world, except, perhaps, in Switzerland and north Germany"*³⁷.

The conception of time as forward looking is strongly expressed in the captivity narratives. The way of appreciating or handling time marked the difference between the so-called civilised America and the "inferior" Algeria. According to Collen Ward, people from complex cultures pay attention to time which is seen *"as money, to be spent, to be saved or, in unfortunate circumstances, to be wasted"*³⁸. Hall gives a concise definition of time in the Western world, and specifically in America where the Americans tend to think of time as something fixed in nature, something from which they cannot escape. By

contrast, in other cultures, time is less valuable than commodity³⁹. On meeting persons from more and less complex cultures, Americans tend to perceive the “Algerines” as rude and lazy because of their flexible handling of time⁴⁰. In captivity, Algerines are shown as idles, giving no consideration to time:

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 gardens⁴¹.

4. Culture Shock in Religion, Gender Roles, Food and Clothing

The captives’ accounts depict their sufferings as Christians within Muslim slavery. The notion of sufferings is well repeated in the narratives. Maria Martin’s captivity narrative is a case in point:

My fortitude after some time, began to revive; I glowed with the desire of convincing the world I was capable of suffering what man had never suffered before [...] What must the sufferings of a female be who is confined in a dungeon so damp, so dark, so horrible, without bed or straw ,her limbs loaded as mine were, with no refreshment but dry mouldy bread, without so much as a drop of broth, without a consoling friend, and who under these afflictions, trust for her recovery to the efforts of nature alone⁴².

Through their narratives, the captives drew a kind of comparison between their Christian teachings and the harsh treatment they lived in their captivity. In the Bible, the prison is the potential means for reforming criminals so they could be returned to society as upright citizens⁴³. The captives regard their captors as tyrants for imprisoning them without being accused of something wrong. The notion of suffering is repeated throughout the narratives as a reference to Jesus

Christ sufferings. The humanity of the captives and the inhumanity of the masters are put in contrast. Indeed, Americans perceive themselves as God-fearing people whereas Muslims are seen as zealots⁴⁴. The Americans not only praise themselves as the blessed human beings, but also construct their values and social norms as the ideal norms for other nations to follow.

In the captivity narratives all things Oriental contributed to gradual dehumanization of the Barbary powers and their corsairs. By opposition, the captives praise their Christian America; the land of liberty that ever had existed as it was claimed by the Founding Fathers. In this sense, Foss states:

Our country also furnished us with sufficient quantity of clothing, decent and comfortable. This was happy news for us, for from the time of our being captured, to this day, we had been dragging out a miserable existence, scarce worth possessing with no king of subsistence [...]. The generosity of the United States to us their enslaved countrymen was of inestimable value. I was more precious for being unexpected. No nation of Christendom had ever done the like for their subjects in our situation⁴⁵.

William Shaler describes “Algerine” women as secluded dames who “*bloom as it were in the desert, from the complaints of their husbands respecting their extravagance in dress*”⁴⁶. Through his observations on the treatment of women in “Algerine” society, he does not only highlight how early Americans may have viewed the “Algerines”, but he also suggests a great deal about how these authors’ narratives, and their contemporary American audience viewed the place and role of women in their own society. Barbary captivity narratives challenged the conventions by portraying white bodies as the property of their black masters.

In Susana Rowson’s play, *Slaves in Algiers, or a Struggle for Freedom* (1794), Zoriana who offered help for Olivia to escape tyranny within captivity says: “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”⁴⁷. Zoriana sought liberty for herself and Olivia from the land of

captivity because she was a Christian and American in her heart, according to Rowson. She portrays Christianity as the religion of liberty and freedom, Islam as the religion of despotism and subjugation⁴⁸. According to Anne G. Myles in her article *"Slaves in Algiers, Captives in Iraq" (2004)*, Algerian slaves learn about liberty from the Americans. She contends that Rebecca and Olivia have subversively indoctrinated the Muslim women around them with their beliefs. Ben Hassan's daughter fetnah says that Rebecca is the one who taught her that women were never formed to be the abject slave of man⁴⁹. Gender and the reversal of gender roles are the main factors of the culture shock experienced in the captivity narratives. In her work *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman (1999)*, Mohja Kahf says that Barbary accounts portray the Muslim women as being victimized. This means to "liberate" them from the shackles of their "heathen" and "barbaric" societies. Barbary captivity narratives as a genre shows how Muslim women are objects of "Otherness". Following the works of Edward Said and Mohja Kahf, Jasmin Zine argues that the politics of representing Muslim women has been tied to the material and ideological conditions characterising the relationship between the West and Islamic societies. Muslim women exercise 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 them⁵⁰.

During his short travel to Medina, Tyler fabricates an evil picture of the natives' character; he reports them as "cruel banditti" or "wild Arabs" who live in unending misery. But the most extravagant ethnocentric description is that of the "most holy Mohamed an saint" who is reduced to "mere idiot". The dichotomy, Islam and Christianity, is one of the most outstanding reasons behind the captives' culture shock. This theme is tackled in the four Barbary narratives. Its importance stems from the fact that it figures prominently in the cultural baggage that the captives carried with them. Islam is the most distinctive feature that their culture

associated with the oriental countries. Said claims that “untruth” and “falsehood” about Islam and the Muslim World are consistently propagated in the media, in the name of “objectivity”, “liberalism”, “freedom”, “democracy” and “progress”. According to him, the West treated Islam and Muslims within an invented framework filled with passion, defensive prejudice. He thinks that Americans represent Islam as a threat to the democratic order of the Western world⁵¹.

Furthermore, he represents the “Algerines” as ignorant barbarians with a very low education, using such epithets “ignorant physicians” and “barbarous people”. He adds that the “Algerines” are naturally inferior to the Americans, as they behave in uncivilised way and backward manners; “sit cross-legged on the ground” or “they eat with their fingers”. As it is the case with Orientalist texts which portray the Arab’s personality as associated with violence, dishonesty, irrationality, and degeneration. In Orientalism, Said claims that the orientalist believes that “there were-and are-culture and nations whose location is in the east and their lives and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that could be said about them in the West” ⁵². Tyler presents the “Algerine” culture as a poor one that reflects the underdeveloped and the primitive life in the regency of Algiers. The Algerine food is portrayed as inferior in quality and quantity to the American one. Their main dish consisted only of some olives, vinegar and coarse bread. As an important social phenomenon, food is part and parcel of culture and the means of creating, affecting and making statements about one’s identity. Thus, the Americans constructed their identity in opposition to the “Algerine” by using food as an identity matter. The way of dressing is another cultural norm in Algiers that caused the American captives’ culture shock. Clothing is closely associated with identity and status. This correlation is found nearly at the beginning of the captivity narratives. Most of the captives complain about the fact that soon as they are boarded by the Algerian corsairs, they are stripped off their clothes. Stripping off their European or western clothes is

experienced as an attack in the sense of their identity, of who and what they are. It is felt as a cultural shock because these European clothes are replaced by Algerian garments. These signify an imposed identity, a way of being stranger to the self. The Algerian clothes are synonymous with an alienation from the self, and one's own identity.

5. Conclusion

It follows from this study that American Barbary captivity narratives were not solely the product of an early American orientalist vision of North Africa, but that of a cultural shock brought out by contact of two strikingly different cultures under war-time conditions. Even under normal and ordinary conditions, contact with cultures other than one's own involves a whole psychological process of acculturation that some people manage to undertake successfully by accepting differences and adjusting to foreign ways of life accordingly, while other others, who can be called the maladjusted, are incapable of crossing cultures. When the latter describe the cultures of other people, they generally give us a stereotypical vision of these cultures. Differences in cultures are thus reduced to value judgements in favour of the home cultures. These value judgements can only be accentuated when they are given under timewar conditions. However, in sorting out these value judgements about clothing, foodways, religious faiths, customs and government in American Barbary captivity narratives, we have to pay attention to individual psychological differences in the stereotypical visions of the captive authors, depending on their backgrounds. Cathcart, for example, is the one captive who managed to make the most of the initial cultural shock. Like all the Barbary captivity narratives, his account reads as a success story full of "pluck and luck". Cathcart like the other captives, whether fictional or real, experienced a cultural shock, but he eventually managed to get over it to become a man of importance in the very culture that had enslaved him. The level of cultural shock

is higher in Foss's and Martin's narratives than in those by Cathcart and Tyler. This might be accounted for in terms of class and gender. Foss is just a mariner with no education to equal that of Cathcart and Tyler. His lower class status arguably made him more susceptible to normative social and cultural distinctions that he had learned to observe in his own culture. If Cathcart's and Tyler's narratives can be read respectively as a success story and a philosophical tale, Foss's narrative deserves to be called a gothic narrative.

In this research, a huge number of cultural incidents related to clothing, foodways, religion, and customs are negotiated differently by the authors under study according to the degree of cultural shock. Throughout the narratives one can notice the captives' tendency to portray Islam as synonymous with tyranny. The antagonism of the two religions in Captivity narratives helps to spread out western anti-Islam to the United States. The reversal of their situation in the Muslim land is a reason behind their cultural shock because the captives have already assimilated all the prejudices of their countrymen about Islam as a culture and religion. The fear they express seems to be inbuilt, Algiers is just an occasion that triggers it. This confirms the traditional confrontation between Islam and Christianity which resulted in ultimate conflict. The cultural shock experienced by the American captives is caused by the traditional form of the Algerine government. The American celebration of its democratic government was interrupted by the imprisonment of its citizens in Algiers. The captives had not yet enjoyed freedom in their country when they were caught and imprisoned in Algiers. Maria Martin and Susana Rowson use fiction to speak about the conditions of women under their abusive master husbands. The male Algerians are compared to the aristocratic members in gothic fiction. The "slavery" of women is culturally shocking to the captives since it speaks about their own condition as well. However, their condition as slaves is even worse than that of women since their masters do not regard them as human beings. The reversal of gender roles

engendered the captives' cultural shock. Very often the captivity narratives refer to the fact that their masters' foodways are repulsive. The dietary regime that they are obliged to eat is repulsive not only in terms of biology but in terms of what it signifies. Eating staple foods peculiar to the Algerian Corsairs is equivalent to an ingestion of another identity, of alienating the self from its cultural core, in other words, it is sharing the being of the captives. This ingestion of the identity of the other causes nausea in terms of biological reaction. The cultural shock that the captives felt is a result of the necessity to eat the food they do certainly abhor in order to survive. The American captives are culturally shocked because they were obliged to disregard their American identities as they are signified by their clothing fashion and to adopt a foreign mode of dressing. This Wearing the Corsairs clothes is for the most of them strikingly similar to the adoption of another identity.

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