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Article abstract

Daniel Defoe's fictional autobiographies often contain a puritanical conversion narrative, but *Colonel Jack*'s narrator is unique in his problematized relationship to Christian conversion. Alert to the negative implications of mercenary conversion, Defoe presents in *Colonel Jack* a hero who not only revels in his complex ploys to evade the law, but explicitly rejects conversion to Christianity at several points in the narrative. By reading *Colonel Jack* alongside narratives of European enslavement and incarceration, I suggest that in this text Defoe deliberately reproduces the form of the popular Barbary captivity narrative. This subgenre of narrative portrays conversion as a force to be resisted, informs Jack's reluctance to embrace Christianity, and ultimately suggests that living in a Christian nation may actually be a hindrance to conversion, making Catholic South America a milieu more conducive to the protagonist's religious transformation than Protestant Virginia.

Defoe's Unchristian Colonel: Captivity Narratives and Resistance to Conversion

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Daniel Defoe's fictional autobiographies often contain a puritanical conversion narrative that includes the following distinctive stages: sinful living; labour at mercantile pursuits; improvement of personal and financial circumstances; amassing sufficient wealth to avoid work; a period of discretionary time, comfort, and contemplation; and ultimately, conversion, repentance, and submission to Christian teachings. The conversion narrative is flexible and encompasses two types of stories: the ambiguous and the straightforward. *Moll Flanders* (1722), falling into the former category, leaves scholars like Gabriel Cervantes and Maximillian Novak dubious about the eponymous narrator's claims to repentance.[1] In contrast, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is a clear-cut account of conversion, the narrator attaining a sincere belief in "the invisible Power which alone directs such things."[2] Crucially, although Crusoe's father announces in the first pages of the narrative that his son will be punished, the hero's repentance takes place in solitude, when he is released from both the pressure of his family expectations and the "seafaring wickedness"[3] of his shipboard life. In *Colonel Jack*

1. Gabriel Cervantes, "Convict Transportation and Penitence in *Moll Flanders*," *English Literary History* (*ELH*) 78, no. 2 (2011): 315–36; Maximillian E. Novak, "Conscious Irony in *Moll Flanders*: Facts and Problems," *College English* 26, no. 3 (1964): 201.

2. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. Evan R. Davis (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2010), 121. All subsequent citations refer to this edition.

3. Ibid., 120.

(1722)—inspired by Barbary captivity narratives, which shape the novel's interactions with ideas of race and slavery—Defoe once again demonstrates that solitude and freedom are prerequisites for a full and genuine conversion.[4]

Many of Defoe's novels include false, incomplete, or temporary conversions. The protagonist of *Roxanna* (1724) explicitly addresses the issue of false repentance when she observes that "the repentance which is brought about by the mere apprehensions of death wears off as those apprehensions wear off, and death-bed repentance, or storm repentance, which is much the same, is seldom true."[5] Indeed, the appearance of a brief "storm repentance" and subsequent backsliding, such as Robinson Crusoe experiences during his first voyage, is often a signal that Defoe's characters need to undergo more labour and suffering before they can earn their happy ending. The struggle of *Colonel Jack*'s narrator, however, is not a story of false conversion and backsliding. Instead, Jack denies ever having been a Christian. This denial problematizes the process of conversion in this novel. Alert to the negative implications of a conversion driven by monetary motives rather than religious principles, Defoe presents a hero who not only revels in his complex ploys to evade the law but explicitly rejects conversion to Christianity at different points in the narrative. Unlike Crusoe, who "was sincerely affected" by his father's Christian teachings and "resolved" to follow them,[6] Jack is not spurred to repentance—however superficial or temporary—when he is introduced to Christian precepts. Instead, Jack stubbornly refuses Christianity and Christian teachings. By reading this novel alongside narratives of European enslavement and captivity, particularly the genre known as Barbary

4. See Catherine Fleming, "'My Fellow-Servants': Othering and Identification in Daniel Defoe's *Colonel Jack*," *Defoe Studies* 11, no. 1 (2019): 17–35; available online at Digital Defoe.

5. Daniel Defoe, *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress*, ed. R. Brimley Johnson (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1926), 123. Defoe's *Roxana* has left scholars even more baffled, leading George Starr to conclude that the narrative is unfinished while others, like C. R. Kropf, suggest that *Roxana* is one of its author's negative exempla who never truly repents and whose remains in a state of physical and spiritual damnation at the end of the narrative. See George A. Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), 183; C. R. Kropf, "Theme and Structure in Defoe's *Roxana*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 12, no. 3 (1972): 467–80.

6. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 50.

captivity narratives, I suggest that Defoe deliberately reproduces the form of this popular genre in *Colonel Jack*. These narratives, which portray conversion as a force to be resisted, inform Jack's reluctance to embrace Christianity and ultimately suggest that living in a Christian nation may be a hindrance to conversion, ironically making Catholic South America a milieu more conducive to Jack's conversion than Protestant Virginia.

Since G. A. Starr's seminal *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (1965), scholars have recognized the importance of religious narratives to Defoe's writing. Because Defoe writes so often and so fluently on spiritual matters, his texts have often served as an index of eighteenth-century religious attitudes, making the relationship between belief, conversion, and resistance in his novels worthy of careful consideration. Defoe's dissenting Protestantism shapes not only his colonial and mercantile beliefs but also his narrative form.[7] In her monograph *Daniel Defoe: The Whole Frame of Nature, Time and Providence* (2007), Katherine Clark devotes an entire chapter to the orthodoxy of *Robinson Crusoe*'s penitential narrative.[8] Although there has been considerable scholarship devoted to providence, spiritual autobiography, and the pilgrim allegory in *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe's *Colonel Jack* has received considerably less scholarly attention, including fewer direct religious references and appearing to offer less scope for discussing the author's religious beliefs.[9] Jack's narration is significantly less focused on religion than is Crusoe's. Although *Colonel Jack* includes a captivity narrative, it does not follow the standard frame of the American

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7. Hans Turley, "Protestant Evangelicalism, British Imperialism, and Crusonian Identity," in *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840*, ed. Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 177; Andrew Fleck, "Crusoe's Shadow: Christianity, Colonization, and the Other," in *Historicizing Christian Encounters with the Other*, ed. John C. Hawley (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 74–89.

8. Katherine Clark, *Daniel Defoe: The Whole Frame of Nature, Time and Providence* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 113–36.

9. See J. P. Hunter, *The Reluctant Pilgrim: Defoe's Emblematic Method and Quest for Form in "Robinson Crusoe"* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966); James S. Preus, *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987); Manuel Schonhorn, *Defoe's Politics: Parliament, Power, Kingship, and "Robinson Crusoe"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and George A. Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography*, cited above, and *Defoe and Casuistry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971).

puritanical captivity narrative. Tara Fitzpatrick argues that captivity in this genre serves as a test of faith through suffering and helps form one of the "central American archetypes—the imperiled but chosen pilgrim alone in the wilderness braving the savage 'other.'"[10] Instead, Jack is held captive by his fellow Europeans in already tamed and "civilized" areas. Unlike *Robinson Crusoe*, which, as J. P. Hunter demonstrates in his *Reluctant Pilgrim* (1966), vindicates Crusoe's status as a convert through the performance of spiritual exercises—including Bible reading, regular prayers, and keeping the Sabbath—*Colonel Jack* does not convert its eponymous narrator until the final pages of the book, leaving him no opportunity to demonstrate his sincerity.[11] The book fulfills Elizabeth Reis' definition of a conversion narrative—it is an "oral testimony" that proves its hero's worthiness to enter Christian society; it also reflects D. Bruce Hindmarsh's primary argument for conversion narratives to be seen as sites for "introspection and assurance" that move "from a psychological state of anxiety or despair to one of peace and joy."[12] Yet Jack's story is too long, too varied, and too focused on secular concerns to fit comfortably into these standard forms. Instead, *Colonel Jack* draws on Barbary captivity narratives to offer a complex, multilayered image of conversion. Defoe achieves this by inserting conversion stories told by other characters into his novel, paralleling the God/man relationship with the master/servant dynamic, and depicting Jack's resistance to conversion.

Unlike the sinner-heroes of Defoe's other novels, Jack does not resist conversion to a Christian lifestyle by deliberately turning away from right conduct. Indeed, Jack seems to be as ignorant of the tenets of Christianity as he is of the idea of a Christian name. Jack's confusion over his status in the Christian community is evident when his Virginian master asks for his "Christian Name."[13] Jack admits not

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10. Tara Fitzpatrick, "The Figure of Captivity: The Cultural Work of the Puritan Captivity Narrative," *American Literary History* 3, no. 1 (1991): 2.

11. Hunter, *The Reluctant Pilgrim*, 168–69.

12. Elizabeth Reis, "Seventeenth-Century Puritan Conversion Narratives," in *Religions of the United States in Practice*, vol 1, ed. Colleen McDannell (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 22; D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 48.

13. Daniel Defoe, *The History and Remarkable Life of the Truly Honorable Colonel Jacque, Commonly Called Colonel Jack*, ed. Gabriel Cervantes and Geoffrey

only to knowing "little or nothing of myself, nor what my true Name is … [nor] which is my Christian-Name or which my Sir-Name," but also to being ignorant of "whether I was ever Christen'd" (169). The repetition of terms related to baptismal naming—"Christian Name," "Christian-Name," and "Christen'd"—draws attention to Jack's lack of standing in the religious community. While his master knows that "Christian" is both a religious marker and a descriptor that would identify its bearer as part of a community, Jack, lacking in education, is uncertain about his name and his standing in the spiritual community. For some characters, ignorance like Jack's presents a clear opportunity for conversion. The "blinded, ignorant" Friday, for instance, passively accepts "the knowledge of the true God" and declares that Crusoe need only "tell them know God, pray God" to make his fellows "live new life."[14] Friday's hesitancy, which centres on traditionally difficult areas of Christian theology (e.g. the existence of the devil), is not a demonstration of spiritual individuality but rather an opportunity for Crusoe to teach him; these conversations are the means by which the hero becomes further "informed and instructed" in his own religion.[15] Jack, however, insists that he belongs with upper-class, educated men, and in his case, pride and ignorance fuel his resistance to Christian teachings; his recalcitrance, a natural outcome of his background, echoes his instinctive resistance to enslavement and capture, while connecting him to stories of genteel Christian captives taken by Muslim pirates.

The enslavement of Europeans by hostile, foreign, and most often non-Christian forces was an important and visible element in Defoe's society. W. R. Owens observes that Defoe's audience "would have known a great deal about this subject" and that "the capture, and enslavement of Christians in Muslim North Africa loomed large in the minds and imaginations of English, Scottish, and Irish people in the early modern period."[16] This visibility was driven by the stories

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Sill (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2016), 169. All subsequent citations to this edition will be in text.

14. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 228–36.

15. Ibid., 36.

16. W. R. Owens, "Defoe, Robinson Crusoe, and the Barbary Pirates," *English* 62, no. 236 (2013), 52–53. See also Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607–1776* (Chapel Hill: Omohundro

of Christian captives that resurfaced in newspapers, sermons, and popular narratives. Christian captivity also appeared as a feature in a number of novels: Gabriel de Brémond's *The Happy Slave* (1674; trans. 1677), which went through multiple English editions between its initial publication and the apprearance of *Colonel Jack* in 1722,[17] is one of many narratives to portray Christian captives winning the love, affection, trust, and finally conversion of their Muslim masters.[18] Other narratives foreground the struggle and escape of captured Christians, including: Penelope Aubin's *The Strange Adventures of the Count of Vinevil* (1721) and *The Noble Slaves; or, the Life and Adventures of Two Lords and Two Ladies* (1722), as well as Eliza Haywood's *The Fruitless Enquiry* (1727) and *Philidore and Placentia: or, l'amour trop délicat* (1727).

Direct and indirect allusions to the enslavement of Christians appear in several works attributed to Defoe. The *Atlas Maritimus*, a comprehensive reference work to which Defoe contributed and which reflects his Eurocentric view of trade, makes oblique references to "Christian Captives deliver'd out of the cruel Hands of the *Turks*."[19] While the *Atlas Maritimus* refuses to address the issue of enslavement in any depth, the plot of *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe's most famous work, hinges on slave-taking by Muslims.[20] As Crusoe informs us, when he begins his career as a sea-faring merchant, he has only made one successful voyage. Then, on his very next trip, he is captured by "a *Turkish* Rover of *Sallee*," carried to the African coast and "made [a] Slave."[21] Crusoe's experience connects him to thousands of Englishmen who were victims of what Robert Davis calls "small-scale" Muslim slave-taking, which involved both piracy and inland raids for slaves and

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Institute of Early American History and Culture/ University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 70–72.

17. Robert Ignatius Letellier, *The English Novel, 1660–1700: An Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 212.

18. Gabriel de Brémond, *The Happy Slave*, translated by "a person of quality" (London: Printed for Gilbert Cownly, 1686; Ann Arbor, MI: Text Creation Partnership, 2011), 3.303.

19. *Atlas Maritimus & Commercialis; or, A General View of the World, so Far as Relates to Trade and Navigation* (London: Printed for James and John Knapton, *et al.*, 1728), 240.

20. Ibid.

21. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 61.

other booty.[22] These raids, in which enslavers captured and subjected to slavery small groups of five to twenty Europeans, had a devastating impact on the morale of sailors and merchants, as did the trade in indentured servants to which Jack falls prey in *Colonel Jack*. Defoe's stories of captivity and enslavement take place in a world in which any sailor, merchant, or traveller at sea faced the threat of religiously justified slavery.[23]

Historical narratives of captivity share many elements with Defoe's brand of putative adventure. The settings of the former are hostile and outside the bounds of European law, justifying what Jeremy Wear calls the "predatory trade practices" and "ambiguous morality" of Defoe's merchants.[24] Their heroes are, for the most part, from the middling and lower classes, exactly the strata from which Defoe drew his most successful characters. The participants in captivity narratives are, as W. Sherlock highlights in his sermon, "the Men who make you Rich, who bring the *Indies* Home to you, and Cloath you with all the Bravery of the *East*"—that is, the merchants, sailors, and adventurers whose primary concern is commerce.[25] These mercantile heroes are also special in some way, literally and physically separated from other Europeans; Crusoe, for example, is, kept aside from his fellow prisoners, being especially "young and nimble, and fit for his Business."[26] Others are distinguished by other factors: the circumstances of their captivity and sale, conditions that physically separate them from their fellows; by the

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22. Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 8.

23. Another narrative, *Madagascar; or, Robert Drury's journal, during fifteen years captivity on that island*, may offer another example of Defoe's engagement with captivity narratives. The authorship of this work has been debated since its first publication in 1729. While most scholars agree that Robert Drury was a real person and had indeed been shipwrecked in Madagascar, Defoe was first proposed as the "real" author of the narrative in the 1800s, and there has been little consensus as to its authorship since. Whether this book was written by Defoe, edited by Defoe, or never even crossed Defoe's desk, its 1729 publication means that, whatever it might reveal about the genre of captivity narratives, it is unlikely to have had a direct influence on the 1722 *Colonel Jack*.

24. Jeremy Wear, "No Dishonour to Be a Pirate: The Problem of Infinite Advantage in Defoe's *Captain Singleton*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 24, no. 4 (2012): 596.

25. W. Sherlock, *An Exhortation to those Redeemed Slaves* (London: Printed for William Rogers, 1702), 17.

26. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 61.

race, language, education, and religion which differentiate them from the people around them; or by tales of their bravery and resistance, as we see in the narratives of Captain Phelps and Mr. T. S.[27] The special qualities of these narrators are common to many of Defoe's narratives, in which unusual or extraordinary stories of adventure predominate.

Enslavement, whether of his heroes or other characters, is a common plot device in Defoe's adventure stories. As Dennis Todd argues in *Defoe's America* (2010), the author's portrayal of indentured servants in both *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack* comprises many of the elements that Orlando Patterson identifies as central to the state of enslavement in his study *Slavery and Social Death* (1982).[28] Both Moll and Jack suffer the social death and natal alienation that Patterson defines as central to the experience of slavery, and Defoe's protagonists are thus forced to redefine themselves and their relation to the world.[29] Although only Crusoe experiences literal slavery at Muslim hands, Colonel Jack's much longer term of imprisonment and exile abroad generates more parallels with stories from the Barbary slave trade, encouraging a deeper comparison between the protagonist's experiences and those of prisoners facing forcible conversion. Unlike Crusoe, whose Barbary captivity lasts only a few pages and whose primary struggle occurs in isolation, Jack is seized along with a group. Like the hero of a captivity narrative, Jack spends some time in captivity with his fellows, attempts to escape his fate, and then surrenders to the greater force of his enemies. Similarly to the Christian captives he resembles, he is dressed in coarse clothing and sent to hard physical labour among low company, his new associates directly contributing to his drop in status. Also like these heroes, Jack spends much of his narrative striving to escape the restrictions placed on him and to return to his native land.

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27. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 61; Thomas Phelps, *A True Account of the Captivity of Thomas Phelps at Machaness in Barbary* (London: Printed by H. Hills jun. for Joseph Hindmarsh, 1685), 2; T. S., *The Adventures of (Mr. T. S.), an English Merchant, Taken Prisoner by the Turks of Algiers, and Carried into the Inland Countries of Africa* (London: Printed, and are to be sold by Moses Pitt, 1670), 8–9.

28. Dennis Todd, *Defoe's America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 135–38; Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

29. See Patterson, "Introduction: The Constituent Elements of Slavery," in *Slavery and Death*, 1–14.

It is not surprising that Jack's first attempt to escape is a violent one. Defoe foregrounds the martial prowess that both Jack and Crusoe acquire in order to establish their individual strength of character and will, and to emphasize their special positions vis-à-vis their fellow captives. Writers of captivity narratives often used violence as a shorthand to show that a captive would not "deliver [himself] into the Enemies hands [*sic*] without a stroke," and to prove that they were not "unworthy" of freedom, as the author of *The Adventures of (Mr. T. S.), an English Merchant* suggests.[30] Jack may have been tricked into submission, as were other captives like Thomas Phelps,[31] but he defends his right to freedom, risking physical violence in an escape attempt. Defoe's heroes also converge with archetypical Christian captives in upholding their right to liberty and their special status. Crusoe brags of being singled out by "the Captain of the Rover, as his proper prize,"[32] and Jack also emphasizes his special position with the captain or "kidnapper," professing that the man directs his concerns at "me more particularly" (160), especially after Jack reveals his financial capacity.

For Jack, offering money to his captors is the next step in asserting his right to freedom. He attempts to secure the cash with which to redeem himself and return to England by writing letters to his English compatriots. Jack's strategy replicates the struggles of Barbary captives for redemption from slavery through monetary means. The practice of redemption—or paying a sum to the slave's current owner to ensure a person's release— appeared in authentic letters from slaves in Muslim nations, newspaper accounts of enslavement, and both fictional and autobiographical narratives. A typical example is the 1739 letter of Nicola Sarcinelli, who wrote home to tell his family that "if you do nothing to procure the alms for my ransom … I will not be able to suffer any more."[33] Unlike Sarcinelli and the majority of captives, Jack has

30. T. S., *The Adventures of (Mr. T. S.), an English Merchant*, 8–9; see also a modern edition of this text in Daniel J. Vitkus, ed. *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 195.

31. Phelps, *A True Account of the Captivity of Thomas Phelps at Machaness in Barbary*, 2.

32. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 61.

33. Nicola Sarcinelli to his father, Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Santa Casa per la Redenzione dei Cattivi, bu. 16, case 3247, quoted in Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*, 157.

enough money to buy his freedom, but his distance from the source of his funds leaves him reliant on his English contacts. Although captives regularly wrote about their willingness to endure pain to attain their freedom, for many, it was money that finally bought them an escape to their homeland. Sending letters or messages to their homes, families, friends, or even to other Europeans in the area who the prisoners thought might help was an important part of their strategy for escape.

Jack's emphasis on gratitude also fits neatly with familiar models of captivity and emancipation in the historical record. In the verifiable accounts of prisoners and their families, redemption emerges as an important social force. Nabil Matar notes that "thousands of destitute wives and dependents repeatedly took to the streets with petitions" for help, and many redemptions were supported by the government, the church, and private charities.[34] Owens demonstrates the impact of stories of gratitude told by redeemed slaves and disseminated in the pulpit; "elaborate services of thanksgiving," were conducted in metropolitan areas, inspiring a steady stream of donations to the cause.[35] Individual stories were supported by hundreds of other narratives with similar practical and ideological aims; Houssem Eddine Chachia shows how such narratives of captivity and redemption emphasize the importance of remaining "grateful and faithful" to God and to one's home country.[36] Defoe's *Colonel Jack* promotes a system of charity whereby beneficence is earned and must be recompensed with gratitude and indebtedness. Jack's actions and merits so impress his master that, without the aid of friends in England, he is granted freedom, slaves, and a plantation of his own; he responds with fervent gratitude and submission to his master. Jack does not simply owe his freedom to his master, but to the English government that pardons him and allows him to go home. For Jack, captivity is not just a matter of enforced imprisonment in a foreign land. He is also liable to imprisonment and execution for treason because he participated in the Jacobite rebellion. Therefore, he needs more than monetary assistance from his master

34. Nabil Matar, "Introduction: England and Mediterranean Captivity, 1577–1704," in Vitkus, ed. *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*, cited above, 5.

35. Owens, "Defoe, Robinson Crusoe, and the Barbary Pirates," 54.

36. Houssem Eddine Chachia, "The Moment of Choice: The Moriscos on the Border of Christianity and Islam," in Claire Norton, ed. *Conversion and Islam in the Early Modern Mediterranean: The Lure of the Other* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 137.

and banker: he also requires amnesty from the government to return to his native soil. Like the redeemed captives in the period's polemical writings, the people who "owe" their freedom to "the Charity of private Christians" and to the "Government," Jack spends time being thankful and considering what he owes to his former master and to the government of England.[37]

Jack's escape attempts, his special status, monetary connections, and willing shouldering of debt all prepare him to accept Christianity—eventually. These qualities and experiences, however, engender a strength of character that proves equivocal, ensuring his survival but also inducing him to resist conversion. Here, Jack diverges from the archetypical captive who saw conversion as the path of least resistance. Letters from slaves in Muslim nations, which were published in newspaper accounts of enslavement and in captivity narratives, stressed the ease of conversion as well as its benefits. The captive identifying as T. S., to whom I previously referred, relates the promises, especially that of "Liberty," that were offered to him, and describes the "vast Riches & Revenues" of converted Muslims; he introduces "a *Cornish* man, that by his Apostate had procured unto himself great Wealth," thereby showing the advantages of conversion.[38] At the same time, however, he also depicts the tortures by which some masters hoped to force their slaves to convert. Similarly, in William Okeley's *Eben-Ezer* (1675), which describes being a prisoner of war in Algiers, the writer recalls that "[w]e were under a perpetual temptation to deny the Lord" and take up the Muslim religion.[39] The 1739 letter by Sarcinelli offers another example of the temptation to convert: if ransom is not procured, its author will not be able to suffer anymore and protect his religious identity ("I too will turn Turk, since I am a youth of but 12 years old and I can't stand the beatings that they give me"[40]). Claims that only extraordinary faith or loyalty allow a man to retain his individual self encouraged families to give in to exorbitant ransom

37. I am using the example of Sherlock, *An Exhortation to those Redeemed Slaves*, 16.

38. T. S., *The Adventures of (Mr. T. S.), an English Merchant*, 204, 217, and 17.

39. William Okeley, *Eben-Ezer: Or a Small Monument of Great Mercy* (London: Printed for Nat. Ponder, 1675), 21.

40. Letter from Sarcinelli to his father, quoted in Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*, 157.

demands, while creating a sense of uncertainty around the religious identities of captives.

Some prisoners attempt to justify their decision to abandon Christian ideas, as Joseph Pitts does in his compelling captivity narrative. Pitts defends his choice to convert, insisting "it was my hard Fortune to be so *unmercifully* dealt with": "I being then but young too, could no longer endure them, and therefore turn'd *Turk* to avoid them."[41] He stresses that his youth was as a mitigating factor, noting the extreme circumstances of his torture, which he narrates at length; he also compares himself—a forced convert—to Christians who converted of their own free will. Pitts justifies his temporary conversion by asserting his singularity and situating his decision within a larger struggle to maintain his identity as a Christian and Englishman.[42]

Similarly, the 1740 *The History of the Long Captivity and Adventures of Thomas Pellow* narrates the eponymous protagonist's initial refusal to convert to Islam and "resolv[e] not to renounce" his Christian faith.[43] Although repeated tortures induce him to accept at least the outward semblance of conversion, he insists that "[he] always abominated them, and their accursed Principle of *Mahometism*" and continually searched for means of escape to Christian lands.[44] Even free merchants and visitors to Muslim countries might find themselves persuaded to convert, as *The Conduct of Christians*, often ascribed to Defoe, warns its readers. According to this book, Muslims were prepared to "make those [Christians] who come among [them]… ashamed of their *Country*, and of their *Religion*, and … exhort them to believe in the pure Doctrines of *Mahomet*" and forsake their own way of life.[45] While the book's satire makes it impossible to trust its claims, and it certainly exaggerates the attraction of Islam to its readers, the warning nevertheless reflects a prevalent concern about Muslims' ability to convert captive Christians. The struggle against a foreign religion so central to the genre of the

41. Joseph Pitts, *A True and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mohammetans* (Exon [i.e. Exeter]: S. Farley 1704), 128–29.

42. Ibid., 142–43 and 158.

43. Thomas Pellow, *The History of the Long Captivity and Adventures of Thomas Pellow, in South Barbary* (London: Printed for R. Goadby, 1740), 14.

44. Ibid., 16.

45. [Daniel Defoe], *The Conduct of Christians made the Sport of Infidels: In a letter from a Turkish merchant at Amsterdam to the Grand Mufti at Constantinople* (London: Printed for S. Baker, 1717), 24.

Barbary captivity narrative—the novel's inspiration—explains Jack's otherwise strange reluctance to embrace Christianity.

Although Jack's conversion technically happens in the narrative's last moments, Defoe slowly unfolds the preliminaries to this transformation throughout the text. The protagonist's final conversion is not an abrupt occurrence but the natural conclusion to Defoe's narrative. Jack himself claims that while he was "bred … to nothing of either religious or moral knowledge," he learned virtue through his "abhorrence of the wickedness of [his] captain and comrade, and some sober, religious company [he] fell into," and absorbed Christianity from "the modest hints and just reflections of [his] steward, whom [he] called [his] tutor, who was a man of sincere religion, good principles, and a real, true penitent for his past miscarriages" (339). Jack's interactions with his master, the slaves and servants he oversees, and his tutor set the scene for his final conversion. Jack's master acquaints him with Christianity and teaches him the social virtues that play a vital role in the wayward protagonist's eventual conversion. His tutor contributes his own conversion narrative, which serves as a precursor to Jack's spiritual change of heart, steering the penitent towards newfound spiritual reflections.

In questioning the hero about his name, Jack's master introduces him to the idea of God, an obvious prerequisite to conversion. Their exchange marks the first appearance of the word "Christian" in the narrative and the master's emphasis on integrity, kindness, and gratitude offers Jack a model for his later conversion (169). Although Jack's unnamed master does not explicitly talk about Christianity or about repentance, he brings religion into the narrative by discussing the protagonist's identity as something defined by a Christian name; his focus on the social virtues likewise encourages Jack to take on a new, virtuous persona and appreciate Christian society; these subtle changes in the hero's values lead to his final conversion to Christianity.

Gratitude—the most important Christian virtue, in Defoe's estimation—is a central part of Jack's understanding of proper behaviour, albeit not an uncomplex one. George Boulukos details *Colonel Jack*'s relationship to gratitude, arguing that Jack's time as an overseer teaches him to weaponize this feeling.[46] Indeed, by demanding obedience and

46. See George E. Boulukos, "Daniel Defoe's *Colonel Jack*, Grateful Slaves, and Racial Difference," *English Literary History* (*EHL*) 68, no. 3 (2001): 615–31.

service as a return for kind treatment, and defining kindness as a lack of brutality, Jack is able to characterize resisting slaves or workers as "ungrateful," "obstinate," and "brutal" (173). The absence of gratitude among the rebellious slaves ostensibly supports Jack's claims that they are "sullen, stupid Fellow[s]" (195) who are "rendered miserable and undone" (203) by their own actions. Predicating his own superiority on his willingness to perform gratitude, he assesses the slaves as unfit for the kind treatment he claims for himself. By insisting that grateful service is a necessary response to kindness, Defoe sets the stage for Jack's eventual conversion. The hero attributes his own conversion to a realization of God's power and gifts. Finally understanding life as a divine blessing, Jack claims: "it necessarily occurred to me how just it was that we should pay the homage of all events to Him" (338). Defoe's reformed rogue apprehends that, just as he demanded gratitude and obedience from his own servants, so God "should be given the honour" (338) for the good things in his life. This realization leads Jack to the "shame and blushes" (338) of repentance, and finally to penitence and a full submission to Christian beliefs and practices.

Before Jack can convert, he must, of course, develop an understanding of what Christian conversion means in spiritual terms. The first conversion narrative that Jack hears, and that he conveys to his readers, is that of his servant and tutor. Curious about his tutor's past and about "how it came to pass that he, who must have had a liberal education and great advantages" (205) had ended up as an indentured servant, Jack questions him about his history. This gives the tutor a chance to tell the reader about his conversion, which is reproduced in indirect narration, and to teach Jack what the process entails. In an extended block of narration, Defoe lets the reader know that the tutor's past is a "*renovare dolorem*" (or renewal of suffering), a Virgilian reference that simultaneously confirms the author's own claim to learning and establishes the sin, suffering, and repentance that are central to Protestant conversion narratives.

Declaring that the tutor's story is one of "mortifications" and "repentance," Defoe offers a conversion narrative that covers the standard Protestant tropes familiar to readers of the time. Jack relates his tutor's reaction:

> till God, he still hoped in mercy to him, had cut him short and brought him to public disgrace; though he could not say he had been brought to justice, for then he had been sent into eternity in despair, and not been sent to Virginia to repent of the wickedest life that ever man lived … I found his speech interrupted by a passionate struggle within, between his grief and his tears. (205)

Emphasizing God's mercy and his own wickedness, and seeing the hand of God in his downfall, the tutor teaches Jack for the first time about "Penitence," "Crime," and "Prayer" (206). Defoe uses the voice of the tutor to praise the colonial system—the exile of criminals to a penal colony—and critique incarceration, insisting that prison "was a place that seldom made Penitents, but often made Villains worse" (207). The writer likewise idealizes the tutor as a human product of the former system, underlining that he can not only "talk Penitently," but is "honestly spoken," showing "Tokens of Sincerity" (206). Defoe characterizes the tutor as a "sincere Penitent, not sorrowing for the Punishment he was suffering under" but "thankful for it" (207) as a gift from God for his conversion. The tutor's language echoes that of W. Sherlock, who tells his 1702 audience of redeemed slaves that they must respond to their freedom by demonstrating Christian behaviour. Sherlock warns against turning "your Liberty … into a Liberty of Sinning, and dishonouring God" or else "it had been happy for you, [if] you had been Slaves still, under such Force and Restraints as would have prevented a great deal of Wickedness, if they could not have made you Good."[47]

Jack's reaction to the tutor's narrative, a moment of spiritual self-reflection, also accords with the standard Protestant conversion narrative, as he announces: "I loved to hear him talk of it, and yet it always left a kind of a dead lump behind it upon my heart … a heaviness on my soul" (208). This confession evinces his slow-growing recognition of his own sinfulness. Still, Jack resists conversion, quoting Paul's conversation with King Agrippa in the New Testament (212). In this episode from Acts, Agrippa responds to Paul's story of realization and repentance by saying "almost thou persuades me to be a Christian."[48] Despite Jack's spiritual reticence, this biblical allusion nonetheless

47. Sherlock, *An Exhortation to those Redeemed Slaves*, 12.
48. See Acts 26:28 KJV.

highlights a key moment in the conversion process: realization of sin, which appears to Paul as "a light from heaven" inflicting physical blindness, to Crusoe as a "terrible vision" inflicting "horrors of my soul," and to Jack as a "melancholy" and "heaviness on my soul."[49] With the tutor's help, Jack comes to link at least the possibility of conversion to gratitude. Jack learns to value this quality as a servant and an overseer, declaring that "[t]his Article of Gratitude struck deep" when he thinks on his generous "Old Master" and accedes that "[he] had been a most unthankful dog" (213). If God has created him, the protagonist acknowledges, then this supernatural being likewise deserves his gratitude and therefore his obedience in return for creating both the world and Jack himself. Nonetheless, Jack refrains from making the last spiritual and intellectual leap from here. Although Jack's tutor attempts to teach him to feel guilty for rejecting Christianity, Jack is not yet convinced. The hero maintains that "my Thoughts were [not] yet Ripen'd" (214) to Christian ideas and he quickly forgets what he has been told.

Why is Jack so unwilling to accept Christianity? He confesses to the reader that he does not have sufficient "Convictions upon me" (214), insisting that he is not satisfactorily plagued with guilt to respond to the puritanical call to repentance that his tutor offers. He laments his lack of "religious Knowledge" and insists that the "first Impressions" of their conversations were "not deep enough" (214) to bring him to God. By refusing to convert immediately, Jack follows the path that Leah Orr sees the castaway follow in *Robinson Crusoe*: carefully considering and accepting "institutionalized religion," and "not reacting with ecstatic or charismatic behavior" to a call to conversion.[50]

Perhaps most importantly, Jack—an Englishman—is not yet in the right geographical location for a proper conversion to occur. He is still an exile from his mother country. As he awaits the general pardon that exonerates him for treason, he is still in a precarious legal position wherein he might be returned to captivity at any moment. Moreover, he is still surrounded by people of higher status than his, who have control over his behaviour, and who want to see him convert

49. Acts 26:13 KJV; Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 121; Defoe, *Colonel Jack*, 208.

50. Leah Orr, *Novel Ventures: Fiction and Print Culture in England, 1690–1730* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017), 215.

to Christianity. A conversion under these circumstances would look like succumbing to the pressure of one's superiors. It is for this reason, I argue, that Jack's conversion happens not when he is surrounded by Protestant Christians but when he is trapped in Spanish-held territory. To a puritanical Englishman like Defoe, the Spanish Catholics were nearly as threatening as the African Muslims were to their Christian European captives. While Defoe does not demonize Catholic characters, his references to the Jesuit uprisings would have reminded readers of the threat that Catholicism posed to both their political and religious affiliations. By having Jack convert in Spanish territory, then, Defoe protects his narrator from accusations of coerced conversion or of conversion for the sake of gain. He retains his economic and spiritual independence in this unusual situation. Materially speaking, Jack is already in a comfortable position. Assuring the reader that he is "still very rich" (335), Jack insists that he is "safe in the hands of [his] friends" (331), and not in any danger of torture, imprisonment, or forced conversion.

Although both Jack and Crusoe are captured and forced into subjugation by people whose religion differs from theirs, neither character is ever pushed to convert by someone in a position of power over them and neither character considers religious conversion in the context of his capture, servitude, or enslavement. Crusoe's initial seizure by the Turks and enslavement in Sallee is, in fact, devoid of any direct religious references. Much more directly religious is his antagonistic response to the Spanish Catholic captain who rescues him from his island. While his Islamic enslavers appear to Crusoe as a neutral obstacle to his freedom, the Catholic religion of the Spanish captain represents, in the words of James Egan, "the perversion of true religion, a threat which must always be reckoned with" and which Crusoe takes at least as seriously as the danger of conversion to Islam.[51] The captivity narrative of William Okeley draws this parallel directly, describing "*Egyptian*, or *Babylonish*, *Turkish*, or *Popish* darkness" as means by which "God can carry us to *Rome*, or *Algiers*" in a form of religious slavery.[52]

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51. James Egan, "Crusoe's Monarchy and the Puritan Concept of the Self," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 13, no. 3 (1973): 456.

52. Okeley, *Eben-Ezer*, A8 recto.

Defoe's portrayal of Catholicism, however, is more complex than Egan allows. While Crusoe ultimately rejects Catholicism as "not … the best religion to die with," Defoe's Catholic characters are among his most faithful and sympathetic.[53] Indeed, Jack's close friendship with the Catholic Spaniards enables him to attain the safety and security that he needs in order to find his faith. The radical alterity of Catholicism offers an environment in which Jack's conversion to a non-Catholic form of Christianity cannot be read as driven by financial or social motives. Safely away from the people who captured and enslaved him, and while insulated from external pressures, Jack finds the time to meditate on his tutor's example and teachings in a manner separate from his desire to fit in. In this milieu of spiritual independence, he can freely explore the implications of a God-Master who demands gratitude and submission, without being forced into a corresponding submission to the temporal master who bought him from his kidnappers.

In Spanish territory surrounded by Catholic otherness, then, Jack can safely convert to Protestant Christianity without suspicion of false conversion or the appearance of coerced conversion. In Havana, he is not under threat from the law, from an owner or master, from hunger or want, or from members of a foreign religion expecting him to take up their beliefs. Unlike Crusoe, who finds time for the safe, solitary reflection that leads him to embrace Christianity on a deserted island, Jack enjoys safe, solitary contemplation as a respected guest under nominal house arrest in Spanish-held territory. While the heroes of a Barbary captivity narrative are likely to find proof of God's "Providence" in their "Deliverance," Jack must wait until he is imprisoned to avoid the potential for religious pressure that would prevent him from making the final triumphant journey to home as a free, confirmed Christian.[54]

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53. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 288.

54. *Madagascar; or, Robert Drury's journal, during fifteen years captivity on that island* (London: Printed, and sold by W. Meadows, J. Marshall, T. Worrall, and by the author, 1729), 442. On the authorship of this work, see note 23 above.