A study of the Native American captivity narrative

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A Study of
The Native American
Captivity Narrative
By
Meghan Madden

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Abstract

This thesis examines the genre of Native American captivity narratives and their evolution from their first appearance in the seventeenth century to their waning popularity in the nineteenth century. The thesis starts with the Puritan narrative as a device for spiritual elevation and pronouncement. As Calvinism begins to diminish and the American Revolution approaches, captivity narratives take a turn from anti-Jesuit propaganda to anti-Indian propaganda. Narratives were used not only to warn colonists and Americans of the savagery of Indians, but also to strengthen the separation between the English and Indian inhabitants of America. The anxiety of degenerating into savages themselves became a pressing reality for colonists and Americans, and that anxiety became even more frightful as captives’ adoption into Native American families emerged as a prevalent feature in narratives. The lure of adventure and excitement on the frontier among the Indians was a noticeable theme throughout later narratives. Captivity narratives can be used to understand the formation of the American identity, and their influence can be seen even in modern texts and media.
A Study of the Native American Captivity Narrative

Introduction

With the publication of Mary Rowlandson’s narrative of her personal ordeal during, and ultimate redemption from, Indian captivity in 1682, captivity narratives became an integral part of American history. Before the end of the seventeenth century, American captivity narratives were recognizable as a distinct literary genre.\footnote{Vaughn and Clark. \textit{Puritans Among the Indians.}} Narratives from this genre have become a haunting and sought-after resource for students and scholars investigating America’s colonial past. Narratives such as those by Mary Rowlandson and the Reverend John Williams depict early Protestants’ extreme piety and their fear of the unknown frontier and its inhabitants before the Revolution. In time, narratives by Mary Jemison and Eunice Williams reveal one dimension of the fears of earlier Protestants coming to fruition when, in both instances, they choose to stay with their Native American captors. And later, narratives such as those by the Hall Sisters and Alexander Henry will reflect America’s changing social and political arrangements through the use of this genre as not only as a site for anti-Indian propaganda, but also as site to undermine nations in conflict with a yet-young America.

Captivity narratives spanning the period from the early seventeenth century to the late nineteenth century have been used as a research tool for scholars and ethnographers to further understand the evolution of America’s history. Captivity
narratives contribute to our understanding of the socio-political culture of the early New Englanders and, after the Revolution, Americans, and they have also helped ethnographers map out cultural, social, political, and religious patterns associated with Native Americans. However, scholars must be cautious when using captivity narratives for historical information. Cultural barriers, including language, prevent a significant representation of Native American voices in this genre. Despite there being a significant number of colonists and early Americans who willingly stayed with their Indian captors, most of what was accessible to the public during this time were well-rehearsed stories about a joyous homecoming owing to the grace of God or an intervening government on the captive’s behalf, or, more tragically, a captive’s brutal death at the hands of the Indians. To a large extent, then, the narratives tend to be one-sided as captives present Native Americans as violent savages, uncivilized heathens, and lazy drunkards; lacking captives’ facility with the English language, Indians were not able to refute stereotypes such as these.

Although Native Americans are unable to speak for themselves through publication, the voices of the captivity narrative authors inadvertently speak for them. While captives strove to portray their captors in a negative light, they often presented readers with many acts of kindness bestowed upon them by the Indians. Usually, captives attributed such acts of kindness to God and his willingness to provide his followers with salvation. However, we can see in narratives such as those by Eunice Williams and Mary Jemison that, although Indians were significantly different in terms
of culture and religious practices from their captives, many Indians were as tolerant and just as the early New Englanders and Americans, if not, at times, even more so. What the narratives do not portray is the way that Native Americans were robbed of their homes, property and lands by violence and manipulation, and not only by New Englanders and other Americans, but also by the French. As a result, Native Americans were displaced, suffered the loss of many family and tribal members, and were forced to choose between becoming forcibly civilized according to white cultural standards, or die.

In this thesis, I propose to show the importance of American captivity narratives by revealing the interactions between Native Americans and the colonists and early Americans and, in particular, suggesting how they changed between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries in their revelation of the mistreatment and victimization of Native Americans. Direct accounts of captivities written by Native Americans are limited in number; however, a substantial number of New England and American narratives are invaluable for their intentional or unintentional revelation of the cruelties whites inflicted on Native Americans, as well as for our understanding of the cultural justifications behind the Indians taking captives. As a literary resource, captivity narratives disclose the cultural mindset of Indians, New Englanders, and other Americans during the ongoing war for land in colonial and early-national times.

The paper covers almost 200 years of captivity literature written by different authors and involving different Native American tribes and American towns. To help
readers make sense of this extensive timeline and better track the evolution of the narratives over the years, a chronology is included as its own separate subsection after this introduction. The chronology can be used as a reference for readers as they are introduced to the many different captives; it includes the subject of the narrative and the date of their capture, if and when they were redeemed or returned, and the narrative’s date of publication.

**Chronology**

1675 Mary Rowlandson taken from her home in Lancaster; Redeemed 11 weeks later and reunited with her husband and family in Boston. *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Rowlandson*, first published in 1682 in Boston.

1677 Quentin Stockwell taken from Deerfield Massachusetts in September and returned from Canada in 1678. Stockwell’s narrative was first published in 1684 in Increase Mather’s *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*.

1690 Hannah Swarton captured at Casco Bay by Abenaki Indians. She remained a prisoner for five and a half years until she was finally redeemed. “A Narrative of Hannah Swarton Containing Wonderful Passages Relating to her Captivity and Deliverance” was first published in Cotton Mather’s *Humiliations Followed with Deliverances* in Boston in 1697.
1697 Hannah Duston was taken during the Raid on Haverhill by Abenaki Native Americans. After six weeks in captivity, Duston and two other captives scalped and killed their captors. Her story first became popular by being published in Cotton Mather’s *Magnali Christiana Americana* in 1702.

1704 John Williams taken captive by the Mohawks from his home in Deerfield, Massachusetts; He was redeemed about 9 months later and returned to Boston where he met his four children. *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion* published in Boston in 1707.

1704 Eunice Williams taken captive by Mohawks from her home in Deerfield Massachusetts; adopted by the Kahnawake tribe where she lived until her death in 1785.

1724 Elizabeth Hanson taken from Dover Township, New Hampshire by Native Americans. She was held captive for 22 months until her and her three children were ransomed to her husband. *God’s Surmounting Man’s Cruelty, Exemplified in the Captivity and Redemption of Elizabeth Hanson* first published in 1728 in Philadelphia.
1755 James Smith captured by the Delaware Indians. Forced into adoption by a Mohawk family, Smith remained in Fort Duquesne until his escape in 1759.

1755 Mary Jemison captured by Shawnee Indians from her home in Pennsylvania, by whom she was given to her Seneca tribe where she lived until her death in 1833. *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison*, which was written down by James E. Seaver and published in 1824.

1757 Thomas Brown captured on patrol from Fort William Henry. He was released and returned to Albany in November 1758, only to be recaptured the following year. He was returned to his family home in Charlestown in 1760. *A Plain Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Remarkable Deliverance of Thomas Brown* was published in Boston soon after his second return.

1758 Frederick Schermerhorn captured by Mohawk Indians at the age of seventeen from the town of Catskill. He was released in 1785 and returned home to his family. Josiah Priest published his narrative in 1839 called *The Low Dutch Boy a Prisoner Among the Indians*. 
1770s David Ogden is captured twice by different Indian groups, once at the age of 16 and again in 1812, escaping both times. Josiah Priest published his narrative in Lansinburgh in 1840 called *A Narrative of David Ogden’s Captivity Among the Indians.*

1790 John Tanner was captured by the Shawnee Indians at the age of ten from present day Kentucky. Tanner would live among the Ojibwa Indians for thirty years until he was reunited with his mother and sisters. *A narrative of the captivity and adventures of John Tanner, (U.S. interpreter at the Sault de Ste. Marie,) during thirty years residence among the Indians in the interior of North America* was published in New York in 1830.

1800 John Dunn Hunter was captured by the Kickapoo Indians at the age of two and raised by Kansas and Osage tribe. He would live with his Indian family until 1816 until he decides to go live among the whites and learn English. His narrative, *Memoirs of a Captivity Among the Indians of North America,* was published in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1823.

1824 Matthew Brayton was taken captive at the age of 7 from his parent’s home in Ohio. He would be traded amongst various tribes until eventually landing with Snake Indian tribe. He lived with them for 34 years until a group of traders helped Brayton reunite with his father and siblings in Ohio. *The Indian Captive* was published in Cleveland, Ohio in 1860.
1832 Frances and Almira Hall were captured by a large group of Indians from their small town in Illinois at the ages of 16 and 18. The sisters would be ransomed and returned to their home in Illinois ten days later. Their narrative, *A Narrative of the capture and Providential escape of Misses Frances and Almira Hall*, was written down and published in New York by William Edwards.

1848 James Kimball and his wife were captured by the Snake tribe while passing through the Chillicothe Valley during a journey to California. Kimball and his wife would live with the Snakes for eleven years and bore four children during their captivity before their escape. *A Short Narrative of James Kimball eleven years a Captive Among the Indians* was published in the Cleveland Weekly Plain Dealer in 1861.

**The Arrival of Colonists and Displacement of Native Americans**

In the preface to his study *The Unredeemed Captive*, John Demos wrote that he most of all wanted to write a story about “the people who were ‘already here’.” This proved difficult because of the lack of Native American narratives published and direct accounts of their lives. Lacking such materials, Demos chose an unlikely source: Eunice Williams, the daughter of Reverend John Williams, who accepted her adopted

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2 Demos. *The Unredeemed Captive*: xi.
Kahnawake family and chose to live with the tribe until her death. Although Eunice was not born Indian, she was treated and, in return, acted as one of her adopted Native American family members. That captives would choose to live with their Indian captors rather than return to their families and “civilized” society was a frightening concept to New Englanders. Demos also presents readers with an illustration at the beginning of his book of the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1629. The seal is a picture of a stereotypical Indian: the figure is clad only in leaves to form a skirt and holds a bow in one hand and a spear in the other. Standing on a patch of grass with two trees on either side of him, a speech bubble that emerges from his mouth states, “Come over and help us” (Demos 3).

This image on the seal memorializes another reason for the Puritans’ journey to North America other than their own freedom from religious persecution: to civilize the Native Americans. On this point Roy Harvey Pearce writes in Savages of America, “It was a principle to be expressed in the progress and elevation of civilized men who, striving to imitate their God, would bring order to chaos. America was such chaos, a new-found chaos.”

God-fearing people, Puritans believed it was their duty to help Native Americans create “order” out of the “chaos” that marked their lives by aiding them in becoming part of a civilized and productive society, and, furthermore, they believed the best way to civilize Native Americans was through converting them to Christianity. New Englanders believed that the Indians wanted to be civilized, but a decade before the settling of New England, the Virginia Company told the Governor of Virginia in 1609 that

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3 Pearce. Savages in America: 3.
he had to do everything in his power, even if it meant kidnapping Indian children, to convert and civilize Native Americans (Pearce 8-9). Forcibly taking children away from the tyranny of their parents and their old heretical tribal way of life was seen as the only way to guarantee the full assimilation of Native Americans into the emerging dominant white culture. However, because Virginians’ attempts to convert and civilize the Indians were met with resistance, their confidence in a peaceful “restoration of order” turned, instead, to confidence in violence.

The Reverend Samuel Purchas wrote in his long series of exploration narratives an apology for the English colonization of Virginia. Christians did not originally have the right “to despoil heathen Indians of their lands” because ownership of land “is a right in nature, not in God”; however, Native Americans’ ignorance of how to utilize land properly warranted the help of the English to “bring the Indians from a state of nature to a state of Christian civility” (Pearce 7). Purchas manipulated to the settlers’ advantage the Indians’ belief in the law of nature by claiming that, because their retaliation with violence in the Virginia Massacre of 1622 was a violation of that law, they relinquished their natural right to New World American lands (Pearce 10).

The difficulty presented here is that according to English property laws and the actual Royal deeds conveying property to the colonists in North America, their actions toward native people were not illegal but, instead, had already been justified. Nicholas Blomley sums up the view of European reporters on property when he writes, “the space of the savage was one of the absence of law and property and the concomitant
presence of violence.” He raises the question of whether property, in this case North American land inhabited by the Native Americans, can exist without law, and he insists that law cannot exist without violence. Accordingly, the land did not belong to the Native Americans, but was only inhabited by them, and because Blomley accepts Max Weber’s definition of state and law, “that which monopolizes the violence[,] that is transformed into legitimate force within a territory,” the colonists’ procurement of North America using violence is “legitimate” and rightfully taken action, especially because Native Americans had already violated their required adherence to natural law (Blomley 121).

It is a struggle for a modern reader to accept the idea that, because the Indians did not have boundaries and laws identifying their “property,” by default European deeds could extend across the ocean and justify the occupation and taking of territory in North America. It is also contradictory that, because colonists regarded Indians as following a law of nature that inclined toward violence, they could use their own laws to enforce foreign deeds to their advantage to declare ownership of the land. This process of legitimating property rights through violence and, essentially, manipulation of the law is flimsy; “If by our actions,” says Blomley, “we can reproduce the grid—or even produce it—we can also contest it. Everyday transgressions and disturbances, as well as more formalized political actions. . . can destabilize the rules of property and the spatial imaginaries with which they are associated” (Blomley 136). Manipulation of the word

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“sovereignty” was another contradictory tactic used by the colonists to claim access to Indian property. Jill Lepore writes in her book, *The Name of War*, “Regarding possession, the English typically considered Indians to be homeless nomads who could not own land since they did not ‘improve’ it, while at the same time believing those same Indians could legally sell their land to eager English purchasers.”5 Though Indians did not technically “own” land in the eyes of the colonists, the illusion of sovereignty was created to acquire territory and prevent bloodshed. The ideology of property and ownership according to the colonists became a cycle of violence and destruction of people and places.

**Assimilation and Fear of Degeneration**

While the legality of the Puritans’ acquisition of Indian lands remains a contested subject, New Englanders came over with the dream of civilizing the Indians and converting them to Christianity. As their contact with the Indians became more frequent, the colonists’ sense of religious duty was joined with that of fear: “The threat of becoming something else, something barbarous, was very real for the colonists,” writes Cathy Rex.6 Rex quotes from Lepore’s book to explain the overwhelming fear that their association with Indians instilled in New Englanders about their own identity:

The colonists’ doubts about their own identity were magnified both by their distance from England and by their nearness to the Indians. Most especially, they

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5 Lepore. *The Name of War*: 164-165
worried about the Indians origins and the reason for their barbarity. Either the Indians were native to America...or else they were migrant from Europe or Asia. If native, the Indians were one with the wilderness and had always been as savage as their surroundings. . . . But if the Indians were migrants from Europe or Asia, then they had changed since coming to America and had been contaminated by its savage environment (5-6).

Colonists feared the possibility that they, like the Indians, could degenerate into the savages they were trying to civilize. Thus, establishing an identity superior to that of Native Americans as civilized white Christians became a necessity among the colonists if they wanted to avoid becoming a form of Indian themselves.

As unrealistic was the fear that New Englanders would degenerate into savages, so too was the hope that willing Native Americans could become fully assimilated into white society. According to Rex, Native Americans who strove to emulate Christian beliefs and a civilized lifestyle would “fracture” the colonists’ attempts to establish a dominant position over the Indians (64). The Massachusetts Bay Seal image of a stereotypical Indian in the wilderness provided New Englanders with tangible reassurance that there was a significant difference between the savage Indian and the civilized Englishman. “The relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is a complex mix of attraction and repulsion, recognition and disavowal,” says Rex. The colonized should “mimic” the colonizer willingly, but not with “exact replication” (65-66). Rex uses the example of what colonists would deem a “good Indian” in the form of
James Printer, a Native American who converted to Christianity and worked as a typesetter and printer’s apprentice. Despite his immersion into a Christian and civilized way of life, he was also seen by colonizers as the “menacing Indian.” Printer threatened the “superiority/inferiority” and “civilized/savage” binary used for the justification of colonization and the separation of colonizer from those colonized (77). Assimilation into New England culture became a double-edged sword; if Native Americans refused, they were deemed bad or dangerous Indians, yet if they complied, they were still regarded as “menacing,” and thus also dangerous.

The fear of degenerating into the savages they sought to civilize became a reality in captivity narratives by Mary Jemison and Eunice Williams. Colonists experienced distress and confusion over a captive’s decision to remain among and essentially become one of the Native Americans. Jemison provides a more realistic portrayal of Indian culture and society than seventeenth-century seals or the narratives written by early redeemed captives. And while Eunice Williams’ story, written by John Demos, is fictional, it provides readers with an accurate depiction of her adopted Kahnawake tribe and Mohawk culture. Other narratives, those written by redeemed captives written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, are representative of the genre being utilized to acknowledge and praise the ability of God to punish captors and save his followers. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Levernier claim that Indian captivity narratives started serving as a catalyst for a theological purpose Europeans felt privileged.
Seeking scriptural justification for their existence, the New England Puritans structured their society upon that of ancient Israel. Following this concept, they viewed Indians as neo-Canaanite infidels and would be subdued in the name of Puritan Jehovah. Eventually they elaborated on this concept until Indians were seen as devils in human guise.\(^7\)

Becoming a prisoner of the Indians was taken as an opportunity for a religious experience: a chance to face the devil and deny him. With this opportunity, and by broadcasting their experience, captive Puritans seemingly reached a more elevated spirituality and appreciation of God.

Although religious elevation was a key product of captivity and captivity narratives, the retelling of the tragedy of captivity served another purpose. Lepore considers it two “victories,” one of “wounds” and the other of “words.” She claims the “solution to the colonists’ dilemma between peacefully degenerating into barbarians and fighting like the savages: wage the war, and win it...and then write about it, to win it again” (11). The constant reiteration of Indian savagery and the pious civility of the English would reinforce the separateness of the colonists and the Indians. Lepore’s book focuses on King Philips War and the vast amount of deaths and atrocities that occurred from 1675-1676. It was the writing, the narratives, which fueled English’s victory over King Philip by “drawing firmer boundaries” between the enemies and invoking a feeling of sympathy and connection to the ones that were carried away by the Indians.

\(^7\) Derounian-Stodola and Levernier. *The Indian Captivity Narrative*: 17. (DSL).
Mary Rowlandson and Seventeenth-century Narrative

Two decades before John Williams would publish Reports of Divine Kindness, a lecture claiming it was the duty of redeemed captives and devout Puritans to publish their captivity stories, Mary Rowlandson published the most widely-read colonial captivity narrative, Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson. Rowlandson’s narrative was particularly characteristic of her time because it implicated Indians as the “savage heathens” that were depicted in the Massachusetts Bay Company seal and also efficiently praised of God and his role as a savior. During King Phillip’s War in 1675, Mary Rowlandson and her three children were taken during an Indian raid on their home in Lancaster, Massachusetts. Being taken prisoner was a common and dreaded fate for all of the early colonists. Rowlandson’s narrative develops through a series of “removes” from her home, and before her first remove, as her house is being burned to the ground, she expresses her emotions as she is being dragged off into the wilderness by the Indians:

I had often before this said that if the Indians should come, I should choose rather to be killed by them than taken alive, but when it came to the trial my mind changed; their glittering weapons so daunted my spirit, that I chose rather to go along with those ravenous beasts, than that moment end my days.  

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8 Vaughn and Clark. Puritans Among the Indians: 35. (VC).
Her pre-captivity meditations on what her actions would have been if she were captured by the Indians reveals both the colonists deeply rooted fear of captivity and their feelings about living in close proximity to the danger of being taken captive. Marcia Blaine goes so far as to assert that this common fear was actually part of the colonists’ identity, separating New Englanders from their counterparts in Europe.\(^9\) The anxiety of being captured by Indians provided more reality for captivity narratives, which served as brotherly warnings to others, and a guide to their holding true to the Puritans’ faith in God.

The language in Rowlandson’s narrative reflects the utilization of not only religious sentiments but also the horrific images only a captive could relate to. “It is a solemn sight to see so many Christians lying in their blood, some here and some there, like a company of sheep torn by wolves, all of them stripped naked by a company of hell-hounds, roaring, signing, ranting, and insulting, as if they would have torn our very hearts out” (VC 35). For Rowlandson, the “solemn sight” is not the blood or the death, but the death of Puritans. For obvious reasons her narrative does not address the amount of Indians “lying in their blood” due to the deaths in King Philip’s War, for which there were numerous. Her narrative only focuses on the deaths of Christians, of the pleasure the Indians, or “hell-hounds” as she refers to them, seem to be receiving from the dead bodies, and the danger that she is about to enter. The following pages of her narrative contain her suffering: the death of her child, her disgust with Indian food, and

the long and trying journey through the wilderness with the Indians. Never in her narrative, however, does she fail to remember to praise God for her affliction.

Every act of kindness shown to Rowlandson is always attributed in her *Narrative* to the grace of God, never the good will of Indians. As she begins her journey with the Indians she is wounded and so is her young “babe” who is carried off with her. “One of the Indians carried my poor wounded Babe upon a horse. . . . Then they set me upon a horse, with my wounded Child on my lap” (VC 37). This act of kindness, being allowed to ride on horseback while carrying her wounded child as the Indians continued the journey on foot, is credited to “the Lord renewing her strength” and “carrying her spirit.” Rowlandson’s unwillingness to attribute civility to the Indians held her captor Indians to the stereotype of the savage. She claims they are “unstable and like mad men” because of their constant back and forth threats to kill her and her family. She generalizes on their character: “I considered their horrible addictedness to lying, and that there is not one of them that makes the least conscience of speaking the truth,” despite the kindness her master has shown her (VC 52).

Like Rowlandson, there were many other captives who refused to attribute acts of civility to their Indian captors in their narratives. Quentin Stockwell, captured in a Deerfield raid in 1677, often brushes over the kindness provided by Indians in his narrative, including the “eleven horses” the Indians used “to carry burdens and carry women” and the Indian who “wrapped him in his coat . . . and sent two Indians with a sled” when he thought he could not travel any longer in the cold and snow (VC 82-86).
The Indians, in fact, saved Stockwell’s life on his journey by carrying and caring for him, instead of killing him because he was slowing down the march. John Williams was also careful to never credit the Indians’ civility but, instead, rewrote their acts of kindness into illustrations of God’s hold on his people on earth, even the “heathen” who he “made so to pity” the children or “put . . . into their hearts” any act of kindness.10 Because of narratives like Rowlandson’s, Williams’, and Stockwell’s, American Indians remained type-caste as savages.

A strict adherence to piety was not the only prevalent characteristic of colonial captivity narratives. Authors of the narratives invested a fair amount of attention to sentiment and sensationalism, particularly by creating graphic images for readers of Native Americans killing young children. Michelle Burnham addresses this particular use of sentiment which routinely occurs in women’s captivity narratives: “The number of narratives that begin with a woman being hauled into captivity from the delivery bed is staggering enough that any reader comes to expect this opening image.”11 Elisabeth Hanson alludes to her “youngest child but Fourteen Days old” and “being in that condition, was very unfit for the hardships” (VC 231). Mary Rowlandson, although not ripped from her “birthing bed” as Elisabeth Hanson and Hannah Dustan were, mentions in her first few pages “a sucking Child they knock’d on the head” (VC 33). Reporting on two women in his essay on “The condition of captives,” Cotton Mather describes Mary Plaisted being taken by Indians “about three weeks after her delivery” and Mehetable Haefeli and Sweeney. Captive Histories: 99-100. (CH)

10 Michelle Burnham. Captivity and Sentiment: 50.
Goodwin being captured with her five month old baby, who she later finds hanging from a tree (VC 140-142). John Williams also quickly follows up on the permission he was given by his captors to bury his wife properly with the image of the Indians killing “another sucking infant” (CH 100). “Clearly” says Burnham, “this stylized scenario was both politically effective and potently affective, and later narratives capitalize on the sentimental potential” (50). While there is no way of knowing exactly how many pregnant or “lain-in” women were actually taken captive during every attack, it is safe to say that the reports of murdered children and cruelty to new mothers was used to embellish the savage stigma placed on Native Americans and justify further violence towards them. “In fine,” says Mather, “when the children of the English captives cried at any time so that they were not presently quieted, the manner of the Indians was to dash out their brains against a tree” (VC 50). Such use of sentiment and the Indians’ “manner” further strengthens the bonds that colonists felt which Blaine reports on and increases readers’ sympathy for a captive—the main goal of captivity narratives.

**Hannah Dustan**

Hannah Dustan’s captivity narrative stands apart from the narratives that are usually read, even today. While most captives waited to be ransomed by their family members or for God to redeem them, Hannah Dustan decided to escape captivity and carry along with her the scalps of ten of her captors. Cotton Mather recounts this “heroine’s” captivity in *Magnalia Christi Americana*. Despite having condemned her
sister, Elisabeth, a few years before in a sermon he preached at her execution for killing and burying her twin infants, Mather portrays Hannah Dustan as “the model of the captive women.” In his account, Mather tells readers how, only days before the attack, Hannah Dustan had given birth to her eighth child, whom she watched the Indians bash against a tree before ripping Hannah from her bed and taking her into captivity. Her seven other children and husband were all able to escape the Indians; only Hannah, her nurse, and a young boy started the long journey into the wilderness with the Indians (VC 162-164).

It might strike readers as ironic, if not outright conflicted, that Cotton Mather would justify Hannah Dustan’s murder of ten Indians and consider her a model captive woman. The way in which he describes the ferocity and savageness of the Indians attack—“the Salvages would presently Bury their Hatchets in their Brains, and leave their Carcasses on the Ground for Birds and Beasts to Feed upon”—could be considered even less brutal than the way he recounts Dustan and her companion’s murder of the Indians: “Furnishing themselves with Hatchet . . . they struck home such Blows upon the Heads of their Sleeping Oppressors . . . they bow’, they fell, they lay down; at their Feet they bowed, they fell; where they bowed, there they fell down Dead” (VC 163-164). Mary Rowlandson was given the opportunity to escape by two Indians who offered to accompany her and show her the way back to her family, yet she refused their offer, saying God would save her when it was time for her redemption. But Hannah Dustan is praised by Mather, suggesting she was “not forbidden by any Law to take away from the
Life of the Murderers” (VC 164). As a Protestant woman, in her narrative Dustan strays from the typical structure of a woman’s captivity narrative. Women were expected to be submissive, not only to men but also their God. Dustan did not suffer the affliction God dealt her, thus missed her chance at the divine experience so many Puritans, men and women, most captives received. Her religious piety is also lessened because she is instilled with the ability to murder. Instead of placing her trust in God in the face of adversity, Dustan resolved to take matters into her own violent hands.

In addition to Cotton Mather’s retelling of Hannah Dustan’s captivity, other authors have written accounts of her experience and actions. Long after the events occurred that are first documented by Mather, Nathaniel Hawthorne, writing for An American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge which he edited, actually condemns Dustan for her actions, calling her an “awful woman” while praising her husband as “a tenderhearted, yet valiant man,” for abandoning her and saving their children. In his retelling of the episode, Hawthorne pays as much attention to the role Dustan’s husband plays in saving their children as he does to Hannah’s sensationalized murders; in fact, he makes “Goodman Dustan” the hero of first half of the narrative.

Hawthorne often reprimands Mather for neglecting to recognize the piety and resourcefulness of the Indians, arguing that, because he refused to look beyond his Protestant fundamentalism, he recognizes only the faithfulness of a person like Mary Rowlandson or the exaggerated vengeful piety of a person like Hannah Dustan:
Mather, like an old hard-hearted, pedantic bigot, as he was, seems trebly to exult in the destruction of these poor wretches, on account of their Popish superstitions. Yet what can be more touching than to think of these wild Indians, in their loneliness and their wanderings, wherever they went among the dark, mysterious woods, still keeping up domestic worship, with all the regularity of a household at its peaceful fireside.  

While captivity narratives constantly refer to the savagery of the Native Americans and their “paganism,” they neglect to observe the devotion Indians show to their belief system. Hawthorne goes on to discuss the Indians when it is time to eat, writing, “The barbarians sat down to what scanty food Providence had left them.” His reference to them as barbarians reminds readers that Dustan’s is still a story of captivity to which the stigma of savage Indians is still attached, even if Hawthorne is in a sense defending them. But the “scanty food Providence had left them” is in direct—and possibly romanticized—reference to the scant resources left to the Indians following the invasion of their lands and the abuse they suffered at the hands of the colonists; indeed, Hawthorne writes, “And [they] shared it with the prisoners, as if they had all been children of the same wigwam . . . grown up together on the margin of the same river within the shadow of the forest.” Despite having only limited food for which their condition forced to them forage, the Indians still shared the little they had with their

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12 Hawthorne, “The Dustan Family.”
captives, as if they all belonged to the same tribe in the “shadow of the forest” into which they all had been pushed (Hawthorne).

Hannah Dustan’s actions against the Indians are typically deemed heroic by Cotton Mather and most readers of her tale. However, her return to scalp the Indians for “proof” that she had escaped captivity and murdered her captors suggests an alternative motivation for her violence other than her personal redemption. Glory, revenge or even greed could have fueled her actions. While the bounty for Indian scalps had been lifted months before Dustan’s capture, Thomas Dustan was still able to arrange a magnanimous twenty-five pound reward for Hannah’s scalps, along with the many other gifts and rewards that were lavished upon her when she returned. Hawthorne notes in his account that among the many Indians she killed in order to escape, Hannah also killed seven “copper coloured babes,” an action that may have been out of revenge for her seven children whose fate she had not yet learned. Dustan’s killing of children is celebrated by colonial readers, yet infant deaths at the hands of the Indians are repeatedly condemned in captivity narratives. But still, Hannah Dustan’s bravery is rewarded and met only with praise. Not only does this logic follow that of the Indian’s logic of social justice when enforcing “mourning war” which will be discussed later, but it also provides two sides of violence, one from Indians and the other from New Englanders, with the former’s being condemned and the latter deemed acceptable.
The Pequot War and Economic Inclusion

Two historically significant colonial issues can be seen at work in Hannah Dustan’s captivity narrative. The first concerns the Pequot War. In “They Could Not Endure that Yoke,” Michael Fickes describes Pequot women being taken captive during the war in 1637, sixty years before Dustan’s captivity and thirty-nine years before Rowlandson’s. During this conflict, New Englanders spared the lives of many Pequot women, while dealing out “severe justice” to their male captives. Taking Pequot women captive was a convenient solution to the problem of the lack of female laborers that plagued New Englanders. Because the infant mortality rate was lowering, there were not enough women to take care of children and perform all of the household duties expected of them. In fact, husbands would often loan out their wives to other men to perform some of the “womanly labor” that men did not want to do. Not only did the colonists see captive women as a solution to problems such as these, but they also saw themselves as a sort of savior for the Pequot women. According to the colonials’ point of view, labor in Indian tribes was not divided evenly between genders, so that women suffered from a “slavish life” and sought “shelter from their husbands” among the “admired English.”

The captivities of Pequot women are evidence that New Englanders were capable of violence; consequently, they cannot always be considered victims during

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13 Fickes. “They Could not Endure that Yoke”: 66-68.
times of war. As can be seen with the Pequot women and the Indians shipped to islands on Boston Harbor, captives taken by New Englanders were often treated worse than those taken by their Indian counterparts. The colonists’ use of Indian women to replace and assume the labors of English women follows a logic similar to the Indians’ cultural mandate to replace a lost loved one. However, instead of adopting Pequot women, or even killing them for revenge, they procured them as property and enslaved them. Because they were treated harshly, Pequot women were less likely than English women to forget their home within the tribe and adapt to English life. In this respect, they were unlike captives such as Mary Jemison and Eunice Williams who were fully assimilated into their captors’ families and culture. As Fickes remarks,

One Pequot runaway reported . . . that she had been raped and subsequently punished, a branding administered by a local magistrate, for her unwilling involvement. She had also been ‘beaten with firesticks’ by some of the servants of her master. . . . She made it clear that the branding and the sexual abuse she had suffered were major factors in her decision to flee the colonial settlement (71).

The last sentence of this passage is of great importance. While branding was usually employed as a punishment for Pequot slaves who ran away, the fact that it was “the branding and sexual abuse” that caused this particular woman to run suggests that she was abused before running away from her master. In fact, Pequot women were often subjected to brutality by their English masters, including sexual abuse (71).
One thing that Mary Rowlandson was willing to give her Native American captors credit for was that they never “offered her the least abuse of unchastity” (VC 70). In most female captivity narratives there is either no mention of sexual abuse or a shock expressed that the captors they perceived as “sexual deviants” never assaulted them sexually. According to Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, Indians practiced abstinence from their English captors because they either “found white women unattractive” or feared that “their war medicine [would] become contaminated” by sexual contact with white women.14 Another reason Indians were more often than whites prepared to be generous toward their white women captives is that they frequently adopted them. If a family of the tribe were to adopt their captive who would thus become a sister or a daughter of a warrior, the rape would become a matter of incest not tolerated by the Native Americans. Derounian-Stodola and Levernier do point out, however, that these practices “seem to later have changed among Western tribes who came to emulate white societies less civilized war practices” (4).

The ill treatment of the Pequot captives is not the only difference seen between New England captives and Native American captives. While Indians were given the autonomy by the French to do what they wished with their captives—adopt them or kill them being the two principal options—Indians usually ransomed their captives for money. Captivities typically had little to do with maliciousness or revenge on the part of the Indians; rather, the accumulation of captives was one way for Indians to be included

14 Derounian-Stodola and Levernier. The Indian Captivity Narrative: 4. (DSL)
in the extensive trade market that gradually became prominent in North America. In order to gain for themselves an identity with and ownership of the land that had been taken from them, Native Americans used captives as a means to involve themselves in economic proceedings. New Englanders, however, during the Pequot War saw their captives as their property, and had no intention of releasing them. When their prisoners ran away, colonists used the military and English “fugitive servant and slave catchers” to return them to their “rightful owners” (Fickes 77). Not only were Pequot slaves passed down as inheritances once their masters passed away, but even more horrifically Emmanuel Downing suggested the taking of Indians to “exchange . . . for Africans, whom he insisted would be more ‘gaynefull pillage’ for the colonists” (Fickes 79). Thus, Pequot women not only became slave labor, but a commodity to be traded for even more slave labor. The motivation driving captivities for Native Americans differed significantly from that of New Englanders. New Englanders used captives as slaves, as means to acquire more slaves, and as a way to appropriate land that belonged to the inhabitants before them; Native Americans, however, utilized their captives for much different purposes, and usually for more civil reasons.

Pequot women were of course not the only Indian group that were captured by the English. During King Philips war, English authorities uprooted hundreds of Indians, captured and Christian, to islands in the Boston Harbor to be sold as slaves. In 1675, James Printer would be given the option by Nipmuck Indians to go with them as their prisoner from his town of Hassanemesit, or to run for the protection of the English and
risk being shipped off to Deer Island. The conditions on Deer Island were harsh. There were little resources for food or shelter, and despite orders from the General Court and the appointing of two Englishmen to look after the welfare of the Indians on the Island, Indian men, women and children were starving by the hundreds. The Indians on Deer islands had few bleak options: live and die in extreme poverty and starvation, survive and be sold into slavery, or attempt escape only to be shot and killed.  

Clearly, the English did not discriminate between prisoners of war, enemy Indians, or even assimilated Indians when it came to taking prisoners.

The Raid on Deerfield, Massachusetts (1704)

In 1704, seven years after Hannah Dustan had escaped and returned to her family, the French Canadian Governor Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil ordered a massive attack on the town of Deerfield, Massachusetts. The raiding party consisted of 200-250 Native American men from five different tribes: the Hurons, the Mohawks, the Abenaki, the Iroquois, and the Pennacooks. Becoming the “most devastating” attack on a colonial town, the raiders of Deerfield took 112 captives and killed 50 colonists (CH 1). Of those 112 captives, 21 died on the forced march from Deerfield to Canada, 5 escaped, 57 were eventually redeemed or returned, 19 chose to stay with the French, and 7 chose to stay with their Indian captors.  

From this massive raid, historians and

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15 From Lepore’s *The Name of War*, pages 136-141.
ethnographers have been able to gather knowledge that is invaluable to scholars studying captivity narratives and the relation between colonists and Native Americans.

The motivation driving the Deerfield raid still remains a mystery, most likely because the multiple parties involved in the raid did so for their own individual reasons. Some, like the Abenaki, wanted to incite another war with the colonists; others wanted revenge for previous attacks by New Englanders. The Pocumtucks and their descendants believed they had rights to Deerfield lands, while tribes such as the Kahnawake and Iroquois had political and cultural reasons for participating in the raid—maintaining alliances with other tribes and restoring social justice to their communities (CH 4-5). And, as with all raids on English settlements, participating Indian communities enjoyed monetary gain brought on by their pillaging of towns and English payment of ransoms for returned captives. The French had a host of their own reasons for promoting and supporting Indian raids on English settlements: the strengthening of their alliances among the natives, their instigation of danger and difficulty for their enemies, and their promotion of continued hostilities between the natives and the English (Demos 16). In the case of the Deerfield raid, an additional motive behind the French governor’s instigation of the attack was securing the return of the French captive Jean Baptiste by taking captive a colonist of equal importance, Rev. John Williams.

An important Mohawk legend gives some insight into not only Mohawk traditions, but also into their interactions and relationships with the French. In a collection of Mohawk narratives, a Mrs. E. A. Smith retells an oral tradition from the
Kahnawake’s, “The Story of the Bell.” The legend states that after organizing the construction of a church, Father Nicolas, a Jesuit missionary, convinced Kahnawake converts that in order to complete the church and the belfry they must obtain a bell. The Native Americans collected and traded furs and skins for a bell that would be sent to them on the Grand Monarque from France. However, before the Grand Monarque and the bell could reach the Kahnawake, the ship was intercepted by the English and the bell was stolen and placed in John Williams’ church. Father Nicolas told the Native Americans the fate of their long anticipated bell, claiming it was “retained in purgatory in the hands of heretics” and appealed to them to go retrieve it (CH 217). Thus, the violence that ensued at Deerfield was presumably undertaken by the Mohawks to regain possession of their lost bell.17

The story ends with a question from the narrator: “And how much of this legend is historically true?” The responder, a born resident of Kahnawake “Alexandre,” replies “But very little I fear” (CH 219-220). The story is mostly, if not entirely, fictional, but it nevertheless represents the truth that Native Americans were pushed farther and farther north by hostile New Englanders until they found themselves at the mercy of New France. The urgency Father Nicolas attaches to the retrieval of the bell exemplifies the manipulation that was impressed upon the Indians to take sides in the conflict between the English and the French and participate in the raids. The Indians did not know the significance of the bell; they only knew the stories told by Father Nicolas, who

17 Story written down by Mrs. E. A. Smith in Haefeli and Sweeney’s Captive Histories: 215-220.
assured the Indians that the bell could “be heard beyond the roaring of the rapids” and was “sweeter than song,” which convinced them it was necessary for the completion of the church (CH 217). Missionaries were able to manipulate the Indians’ ignorance of Christianity and their need for French allies to their advantage. Not only could they promise them economic benefits and protection, but the Indians would also be fulfilling their Christian duty by allying themselves with the French. And the Indians were manipulated by the French to achieve certain goals, such as obtaining a captive to exchange for another, which would not have been successful without their numbers.

Two very famous captives have been a great tool in understanding not only the social, political, and religious structures of a certain Native American group, the Mohawks from Kahnawake, but also have allowed readers to study at the structure and clues embedded in captivity narratives. John Williams and his daughter Eunice have successfully stolen the spotlight as the most noted captives taken in the Deerfield raid. While no narrative by Eunice actually exists, John Demos’ biography of her, *The Unredeemed Captive*, provides a blend of historical fact and fictional encounters that provide readers with the best report of Eunice’s experiences and life with her adopted Mohawk family.

**John Williams**

The raid took place on February 29, 1704. John Williams and his three children, Samuel age fifteen, Esther age thirteen, and Warham age four were redeemed eight
weeks after their capture. Williams’ other son, Stephen, who was nine when he was captured, would remain with the Indians for fourteen long months. Eunice Williams, as is well known, was taken when she was seven years old, and chose to never be redeemed.

The age and gender of captives were closely linked to their survival rates. Of the 112 captives from Deerfield, three of four infants were killed during the forced march, thirty-one out of thirty-five children aged three to twelve made it to Canada alive, all twenty-one teenagers survived, ten of the twenty-six adult women captives died on the journey, and all but four of the twenty-six adult male captives survived. “The moral of this seems clear,” writes Demos: “If you are living at Deerfield in 1704, and if capture is your fate, it’s better by far to be a grown man than a woman, and best of all to be a teenager” (Demos 39). The rate of mortality across age and gender is understandable; infants would be very difficult to care for on the journey and thus were a burden, while children, teenagers, and adult males would possess the youthful strength and endurance necessary to survive the long march to Canada. Adult women were often too weak for the journey, or sometimes plagued by the effects of recent childbirth or an actual pregnancy, and they had to care for the small children taken captive. Because the raiding party and the prisoners would most often be followed by a rescue party, the Indians could not risk being slowed down or tracked. Weak links, whether by natural causes or the tomahawk, were usually cut out of the march.

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One captive woman who was killed on the march to Canada was John Williams’
wife, Eunice. After travelling for several days, it is clear that Mrs. Williams was suffering
through the journey and having difficulty keeping up with the other captives. Williams
recounts hearing the news about his wife from some of the other captives:

In passing through the above said river, she fell down, and was plunged over
head and ears in the water; after which she traveled not far, for at the foot of
the mountain the cruel and bloodthirsty savage who took her, slew her with his
hatchet at one stroke, the tidings of which were very awful. And yet such was
the hardheartedness of the adversary that my tears were reckoned to me as my
reproach (CH 100).

Williams’ passionate recollection of his wife’s slaughter is disturbing to imagine, which
the objective of most such captivity narrative pathos was. However, the death of
Williams’ wife was most likely not out of cruelty, but out of mercy. The journey to
Canada was long and treacherous, and especially difficult for the colonists who were not
accustomed to marching in such severe weather. It is likely that the Indian captors killed
Mrs. Williams, and other suffering prisoners, because her death was ultimately
inevitable. “Weak from the start, heavily fatigued, cold and wet from her fall in the river,
she is simply ‘not able to travel any farther,’” writes Demos (29). Mrs. Williams’ captors
kill her with “one stroke” rather than serve her a slow and painful death by starvation or
exhaustion. Like so many other acts of kindness, the Indians’ harsh, but necessary,
resolve to kill Mrs. Williams is turned into another act of savagery by the author.
Indians usually had full autonomy to do as they pleased with their captives; they could ransom, adopt or torture them. However, John Williams’ case was unique from most other captives of this time. Passages in Williams’ narrative reveal his desired death by a certain group of Indians. In his narrative he writes, “As I came nigh the place appointed, some of the captives met me and told me they thought the enemies were going to burn some of us for they had peeled off the bark from several trees and acted very strangely” (CH 101). Accordingly, he does not fear his death because he believes “God will prevent it,” and he makes no more mention of it. Demos, however, in his retelling of Williams’ narrative, explains the actual severity of the threat toward Williams. After a Huron chief is killed in battle, tradition demands a sacrificial death of one of the captives “of comparable rank.” Williams is saved only by the intervention of a warrior, Thaovenhosen, the nephew of the killed Huron chief, who claims that this “dire cruelty is unbecoming to the Christian name” and will only cause “their enemies to grow more ferocious” (Demos 31). Thaovenhosen and the tentatively agreeing Hurons follow the civility characteristic of their religion; it is a degree of civility lacking in the behavior of English missionaries who encouraged kidnapping and forced conversion as the only means through which Indians could escape becoming their slave laborers. However, there may have been another reason for the preservation of Williams’ life. Because John Williams was taken prisoner for the purpose of securing the return of a French captive, keeping him alive was necessary in order to complete that transaction. Christian integrity aside, a question arises out of this fact whether the Hurons put aside their
tradition because of France’s demand for this particular captive; if they were, in fact, merely yielding to the authority of the French, their action here reveals the diminution of the autonomy Indians usually enjoyed over the disposition of their captives.

In 1706, John Williams published the lecture *Reports of Divine Kindness; or Remarkable Mercies Should be faithfully published for the praise of God the Giver*. He delivered this lecture after his redemption from the Indians and in it stressed the importance of other redeemed captives writing and publishing their stories of being held prisoner by the Indians. Published captivity narratives would not only reinforce readers’ appreciation of God’s graciousness, but also serve them as a reminder of God’s ability, and right, to punish and destroy his followers as he sees fit. According to Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney in their introduction to Williams’ narrative, Williams has often been compared to the Old Testament pre-Christian figure Job (CH 89). Williams suffered the murder of his wife and the loss of his daughter to the Kahnawake tribe, but still, his narrative portrays unwavering devotion to God and his righteousness. Haefeli and Sweeney also mention in their introduction that Williams would have remained “relatively obscure” had the Deerfield raid of 1704 not given him the chance to monetize on his family’s sufferings. As these editors see it, Williams’ fame underscores the importance of captivity narratives for their advancement of the English religious agenda.
Eunice Williams

It is no surprise that Eunice is rarely mentioned in her father’s narrative. She refuses redemption, allows her baptism into Catholicism, and freely becomes a full member of her adopted Kahnawake tribe; she is every good Protestant colonists’ worst fear. Very little is known of Eunice and her life among the Kahnawake. She married a Catholic Mohawk man, Arosen, and had three children by him. She became fully assimilated into her Kahnawake tribe and adamantly rejected any efforts made by her father or the English government to redeem her. Traders at the time were involved in negotiations for the release of captives; among those was Johannes Schuyler who made many attempts to convince Eunice to return to her family. “Jaghte oghte”—the Mohawk words for no—is her consistent response to his entreaties (Demos 107). Demos gives us Schuyler’s journal entry after this dialogue: “Upon this my eyes being almost filled with tears, I said to her myself, had I made such proposals and prayings to the worst of Indians I did not doubt but [that I would] have had a reasonable Answere and consent to what I have s[ai]d” (107). Schuyler considers Eunice “the worst of Indians,” worse even than her Indian captors; not only has she converted to Catholicism and adopted Indian ways, but she refused multiple pleas to return home to her family, even if only to visit.

Eunice’s decision to stay with her Native American captors is not all that surprising, when her age is taken into consideration. Eunice was only seven when she and her family were captured; most captives who decided to stay among the Indians
were children. According to Demos, at least a dozen girls between the ages of six and eleven were brought to the Kahnawake as captives, and five would remain and become fully assimilated with their captors. In his book Demos provides readers with a chapter of facts that are known about Eunice and her Kahnawake tribe, and which clarify for us some of her reasons for rejecting redemption. He notes, for example, that “Within two years—perhaps less—of her arrival in Kahnawake, Eunice Williams had ‘forgot [how] to speak English’” (146). Eunice’s loss of her English language, Demos argues, caused a huge disconnect between her life in colonial Massachusetts: “From now on Eunice could communicate only with her new people, in her new place, within a new set of customary forms” (147). When Eunice’s personal interactions became strictly confined to her Indian captors; her dress, her material values, and her social and personal relations all started to mimic the Kahnawake at a young age.

One interesting aspect characteristic of Demos’ book is his incorporation in it of fictional encounters and dialogues that occurred with Eunice. Despite their fabrication, Demos’ passages provide readers with thought-provoking justifications for Eunice’s actions. He speculates on her thoughts and emotions as traders come to plead with Eunice to return home to her father and siblings:

Her English father: what claim could he possibly make on her anyway? With a clarity born of old bitterness, she remembered the last times she had seen him.

She remembered his coming to the village when she was still a small child-feeling

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19 Demos. The Unredeemed Captive, p.142.
scared and strange, and gripped inside by the ties of her old life. She had begged him then to take her away, but he had failed her utterly. A prayer; some empty words of comfort; a sorrowful good-bye. . . . Faithless, forgetful father; protector who could not protect, comforter who could not comfort, caretaker who did not care (109).

At Eunice’s impressionable age, her father was unable to save her from what would be the most horrifying event in her young life. All he could offer her were “prayers,” prayers that could never rescue her mother or herself. Eunice would be able to remember her Indian captors who would soon become her family, providing her with food and caring for her during the journey. Williams’ unwavering faith may have given him the strength to survive his captivity, but at eight years old, prayers and catechism would do very little for Eunice.

After her initial captivity and then adoption into the Kahnawake tribe, Eunice was allowed to make her own decision about staying with the Indians. She would not visit her family until thirty-six years after her capture and many years after her father’s death. Little is known of their initial meeting, but Demos ventures an emotional interaction between Eunice and her brother, Stephen, full of tears and affection. There is no doubt that Eunice’s return to her family would have been joyous, but during it she would necessarily have been plagued by apprehension and fear. Eunice would have felt the danger of “recapture” by the English and being forced to leave her Indian family (Demos 109), and she would also have been fearful of the way the colonists would
respond to her and her Indian family. Eunice may have been born white, but her
children and her husband were Indian, and from all outward appearances Eunice was
Indian as well; her fear that she and her family would be looked upon as unacceptable
and spur a hostile reaction among the English is understandable.

Eunice attended a service while visiting her family in 1741 during which Solomon
Williams delivered a sermon entitled The Power and Efficacy of the prayers of the people
of God, when rightly offered to him; and the obligation and encouragement thence
arising to be much in prayer. The sermon discussed the power of prayer, arguing that
prayer gives believers the “occasion to praise God,” and avoid the lure of sin and
corruption. “I will not tell you what Assurance I have . . . of this Truth, but this I will say
for myself, that when I believe God will not answer the right Prayers of his People, I will
then believe there is no Covenant of Grace, no Promises, no Truth, nor Savior, and no
God” (Demos 205). Eunice forced New England Protestants to question their faith and
the efficacy of their prayers. Her decision to reject their God and remain among the
savages undoubtedly caused them much anxiety that was felt by all colonists who lived
with the threat of Indian captivity.

Eunice and her father provide scholars with an immense amount of information
on Native Americans and on captivity. It is hard not to feel sympathy for the Williams
family; a father who watched his wife die and wants only the return of his daughter.
Eunice, a child taken at such a young age and subjected to cruelties that she is able to
overcome, only to live in fear of being recaptured by another group. Looking closely at
the stories and narratives written about the Deerfield raid, it is clear that Indians have not only been a victim of their circumstances—pushed out of their lands and manipulated by their allies—but even their small acts of kindness and cultural practices are too often taken out of context and seen as savage acts of barbarity.

Elizabeth Hanson and the Decline of Protestant Captivity Narratives

Elizabeth Hanson’s captivity narrative is important for two reasons, the first being that she was not wholly Protestant, but a Quaker. Although Quakers and Protestants share many similarities, there is a key difference evident in Elizabeth Hanson’s narrative that is not apparent in the other Protestant narratives already treated. *God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty, Exemplified in the Captivity and Redemption of Elizabeth Hanson* was written by the English Quaker Preacher Samuel Bownas and is characteristic of the more individualistic nature of Quaker thought and action. Puritan captives such as Rowlandson and John Williams “sought to awaken the whole community,” while Hanson “aimed her lessons more directly at the individual reader” (VC 230). Hanson’s recollection of her Indian captors and their treatment of her lack the generalizations that Rowlandson usually reverted to. While still full of cruelty and suffering, her discourse in the narrative rejects the debasement of her Native American captors that other Protestant narratives resort to. It seems that this would be consistent with her Quaker belief and its tendency toward pacifism.
In Puritan captivity narratives, every act of kindness is attributed to God; Hanson, however, is willing to modify the character of Indians with whom she comes in contact. During the first part of her journey, she tells readers she took “it as a great favor of God” that her Indian captor’s “heart was so tenderly inclined” to carry her baby for her up the mountains as she had to “creep up on her hands and knees” (VC 233). Her acknowledgement of God is still present, but Hanson thanks God that her Indian master was “tenderly inclined” instead of accrediting God with the noted act of kindness, “[in] which he showed some humanity and civility more than I could have expected, for which privilege I was secretly thankful to God as the moving cause thereof” (VC 233). Undoubtedly, Hanson would not “expect” humanity or civility from the Indians who had just killed two of her children, but she is nevertheless capable of appropriately praising God while also upholding the humane actions of her Indian captors.

Elizabeth Hanson goes further even than this when she acknowledges not only an individual Indian’s act of civility, but also commends the entire Indian tribe. When her captors are lacking in food, she is surprised by their generosity towards one another: “Being almost famished . . . Providence so ordered that some other Indians, hearing of their misery and want, came to visit them (these people being very kind and helpful to one another which is very commendable) and brought unto them the guts and liver of a beaver” (VC 235). Most of earlier Protestant narratives are preoccupied with the gluttony and violence of the Indians, never with their sense of community or the kind of brotherhood that they share among themselves. Although Hanson’s narrative possesses
some traits of a Protestant captivity narrative, as when she refers above to Providence “ordering some other Indians,” thus revealing her belief that God had a hand in one tribe’s act of generosity toward another, her parenthetical remark shows an appreciation of the helpfulness and kindness of her Native American captors that most narratives lack.

One noteworthy aspect of Hanson’s narrative is the actual occurrence of cruelty towards her and her family from her Indian master. Her master, who was often very tender towards her, would threaten to eat her baby when he noticed the baby was thriving. In her narrative, Hanson observes, “whenever he was in such a temper he wanted food and was pinched with hunger” (VC 237). Native Americans had been pushed farther and farther from their native lands, and war with the English had devastated their land and made food scarce and hard to find. Presumably, her master felt frustration towards Hanson and her English people, blaming them for his hardships and inability to provide for his family. Hanson and her son’s life were also threatened when the French refused her master’s request to ransom her for 800 livres and would only pay 600 (VC 241). Her master desires to involve himself in the economics of the New World, but remains at the mercy of the French. His anxiety at being unable to succeed in an economic system created by Europeans is, possibly, understandable.

The most important dimension of Elizabeth Hanson’s narrative is not the fact that the narrator is a Quaker, nor that she praises Indians for their kindness and willingness to share. Published in 1728, the date of Hanson’s narrative “chronologically
and symbolically mark[ed] the end of Puritan captivity narratives” (VC 230). By, roughly, the mid-eighteenth century, narratives shifted from their themes of a captor’s spiritual deliverance and glorification of God. Hanson’s would be one of the last such narrative published, and readers may notice the already shifting content of this genre. Although she praises and glorifies God in her narrative, Hanson’s language is not to scale with John Williams’ anti-Jesuit propaganda or Mary Rowlandson’s elaborate justifications for her suffering at the hands of Indian captors in a world predestined by God. Hanson’s narrative can be read as a turning point in the development of a narrative form early New Englanders came to love.

**The New Captivity Narrative of the Mid-Eighteenth Century**

A dramatic shift occurs in the captivity narrative genre during the mid-eighteenth century. Derounian- Stodola and Levernier describe the change as from “religious expression” to “a means for spreading propaganda against those nations and powers that blocked Anglo-American westerly settlement” (DSL 23). Although Protestant captivity narratives were usually published individually and at a hefty price, later narratives were made available in almanacs, an easily marketed and distributed medium that made the narratives accessible to almost all Americans (DSL 23-24). The new and extremely propagandist captivity narratives advanced a few cultural doctrines, one of the most prominent being the justification of Americans’ westward expansion. New-style captivity narratives claimed that Indians were lazy and “unworthy” of their land,
while on the verge of the Enlightenment their authors charged Indians’ with “moral pollution” and with living by “instinct rather than reason” (DSL 64-65). Derounian-Stodola and Levernier summarize the use of captivity narratives to promote anti-Indian propaganda this way:

The Indian is seen as devoid of nearly every characteristic valued by white civilization, epitomizing instead every degradation of the human personality that the white imagination could devise. Rankly chauvinistic, this image of Indians embodies archetypal racist stereotypes traditionally used as propaganda against enemies of Western cultures during periods of war, conquest, and domination. Such propaganda typically begins as misunderstanding, quickly evolves into deliberate distortion of truth, and eventually degenerates into slanderous fiction masquerading as fact (DSL 63).

Earlier, Protestants had used this type of racist stereotyping, the theme of “degradation” and the development of negative imagery to justify wars against Indians and their enforced conversion to some form of Christianity or their literal enslavement. In later narratives, development of this such forms of propaganda reaches new extremes—even the extreme of creating captivity narratives peopled by fictional characters, such as Isaac Stewall and the Panther narratives—in order to completely dehumanize Native Americans. However, in the discussion that follows it is important for readers to notice that the Protestant themes that informed many early captivity narratives do not simply disappear. In A plain Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and
Remarkable Deliverance of Thomas Brown, published in 1757, the narrator mentions Providence twice at the end of his narrative. First, he “begins to commend his soul to God” once he believes he is near death. The second time, a partridge appears right at his feet, that he is sure “must have been sent by Providence” (Zimmer 72). At the very end of his narrative he also includes an apostrophe: “O! That man would praise the lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Bless the Lord, O my soul!” (Zimmer 72). Although his narrative does not attribute acts of kindness to God—in fact Brown’s narrative shows very few instances of kindness from anyone—it still possesses the haunting religious undertones that overwhelmed the Protestant captivity narratives.

Propaganda in Later Narratives

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century narratives were characteristically anti-Indian and highly nationalistic. Josiah Priest, the author of many pamphlets containing captivity narratives, often published poems on the title page of his works. The poem written for the narrative of Frederick Schermerhorn (1758) is indicative of the intense hatred and fears of Native Americans and their hostility.

The glare of fire, its smoke and flame,
Are hues which tinge the savage name;
The screech-the groan-the cry of fear,

Are sounds that please the Indian ear.
For thus, their ancient GORY creed,
Prounounc’d the pris’ner sure should bleed,
And through death’s gate in pain must go
To meet the awful Manito! (Or Great Spirit.)

Priest exploits the savagery of the Indians and their enjoyment of torturing and killing white Americans in his eight line poem. In the narrative which this poem introduces, Priest relates to the readers the cruel jokes Schermerhorn’s captors play on him. An Indian uses his finger to trace a circle around the crown of the boy’s head, indicating where he would soon be scalped, causing the boy to fall to the ground in fear. The Indians are resolved to “uncontrollable fits of laughter,” finding enjoyment out of the boy’s anxiety and their ability to tease their captives with their fate. This tactic used by narrative authors was common; it showed readers the uncivilized entertainment Indians enjoyed at the expense of their innocent captives. Not only do Indians seem to love the “gore” and the “screeches” and “groans,” but are also relish in the fear of their prisoners.

The Hall sister’s narratives starts off “The preceding year will be long remembered as a year of much human distress . . . for while many of her most populous cities have been visited by that dreadful disease, the CHOLERA, and to which thousands have fallen victims, the merciless Savages have been as industriously and fatally

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21 Taken from *Narratives of Indian Captivities*, Vol. 56. Selected and arranged by Wilcomb Washburn.
engaged in the work of human butchery on the frontiers.” This narrative tells the sympathetic story of two young sisters, ages 16 and 18, whose parents had been murdered by the “bloody tomahawk.” The narrative reads as strong anti-Indian propaganda, with captives witnessing the uprising of the Indians and their preparation for warfare against Americans. Americans are considered “defenceless inhabitants of the frontier settlements” and the narrator asserts “no language can express the cruelties which have been committed” in the section on “Indian Depredations” (17). The narrator even includes a bill that was circulated around all over the state announcing the kidnapping of the Hall sisters, the “women and children butchered!” and the “WAR! WAR!! WAR!!!” being brought upon the innocent Americans (17). Throughout the narrative, Indians are presented as war hungry, ruthless, and blind to age and gender during their murderous pursuit.

Priest did not only recount the cruelty of the Indians, but appealed to the strong sense of nationalism that was developing during this time in America. On the cover page of David Ogden’s narrative, A True Narrative of the Capture of David Ogden, Among the Indians, in the time of the Revolution (1840), Priest inscribes this poem:

Why to Greece and Rome: an ancient age;

For heroes should we look, to grace our page;

When thousands here are born, in Yankee’s land,

With hearts as noble, and as strong a hand:-

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23 Narrative of the Capture and Providential Escape of Misses Frances and Almira Hall (1833): 5.
To wrench the victim from the murdering knife
And give the pris-ner freedom with his life.-
Who dare to meet the ambush’d savage yelp
Of warriors seeking for th’ white man’s scalp.\textsuperscript{24}

The last four lines of this poem also preface the narrative of Matthew Calkins and General Patchin. Subjects of narratives at this time were usually referred to as “the heroes of the story.” A reader searching for a hero no longer had to look to gladiators or warriors in ancient texts, but could find one in the latest captivity narrative in their own country. Captivity narratives fueled a change of identity from English colonists to Americans. Strong and noble “\textit{Yankees}” are born in America, surviving and defeating their Indian enemies, and also their British enemies. At fifteen, David Ogden joins the army during the revolutionary war, “for good or ill, come death or life, victory or defeat.”\textsuperscript{25} Not only is Ogden a respected soldier in the eyes of Priest and his readers, but is redemption from his Indian captors is not only his victory, but for all “Yankees.”

In Matthew Brayton’s narrative, \textit{White Indian}, the story does not begin with his accounts of his experiences but with his family’s.\textsuperscript{26} This seemed to be a common theme of captivity narratives during the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Whereas Puritan captivity narratives tended to be a more singularized pious experience written down for the audience; many later narratives had a more personalized appeal to the

\textsuperscript{24} From \textit{Narratives of Indian Captivities} Vol. 56.
\textsuperscript{25} Priest. \textit{A Narrative of the Capture of David Ogden}: 8.
\textsuperscript{26} From \textit{Narratives of Indian Captivities} Vol 76. \textit{The Indian Captive}: 5-68.
effects captivity had on the family. In the first chapter of Brayton’s narrative, his family never stops searching for Matthew. Every rumor or vague tip of Matthew’s whereabouts is investigated and unfounded. For his father, Matthew’s name is “ever in his heart” and “often on his tongue.” His brother forever feels the guilt of allowing his younger brother to walk along a dangerous path alone (10). And his mother would die sixteen years after Matthew’s disappearance, “She died of a broken heart” (11). It is dramatic, but effective. The grief ridden parents of a lost child would be either a sorrowful reality for some parents, or a constant anxiety for others on the frontier.

James Kimball’s narrative, Short Narrative of James Kimball Eleven Years a Captive Among the Snake Indians (1861), focused also on the family and the men of the family on the frontier. Kimball and his family were part of a company making their way to the Golden El Dorado at the height of the California gold rush in 1848. “The company was composed of men like Kimball, young and adventurous, with strong hands and bold hearts eager to solve the problem of life through toil and peril” (5). During their eleven years with the Snake Indians, Kimball and his wife would have four children, one of which would be called “warrior” by the Indians. Their life was relatively easy with his captors, Kimball holding an honorable position of medicine man and given the liberty of taking his family out on hunts alone. Despite their contentment, Kimball is able to escape his family to freedom, killing and scalping about five Snake Indians on their way. Kimball is a hero in nineteenth century narratives. Not only is he able to assert a

\[27\text{ From Narratives of Indian Captivities Vol. 76: 5-15.}\]
superiority over the Indians by establishing himself as a trusted and honorable man
within the tribe that held his family prisoner, but he was also able to smuggle his family
to freedom while still executing bloody revenge on the Snake Indians.

Narratives like Kimball’s, Brayton’s, and even the Hall Sisters were popular in the
later centuries because of their attention to the dangers families faced on the frontier.

**Mary Jemison**

Mary Jemison would become one of the most important young captives in the
mid-eighteenth century who goes on to assimilate fully into the culture of her captors in
which she thrives until her death in 1833. The treatment of Jemison’s narrative is
crucial, for it explains to readers the social and cultural differences and
misunderstandings between English Americans and Native Americans that no other
narrative allows. Jemison was captured at the age of 15 in 1753 during a Shawnee and
French raid in Pennsylvania; she was eventually given to a Seneca tribe with whom she
lived for the remainder of her life. Unlike Mary Rowlandson, because of her young age
Jemison was treated with kindness by both the Shawnees and the Senecas. Her journey
begins much like Rowlandson’s: she sees the scalps of her father and mother who have
been killed by her captors; she initially refers to her captors as “cruel monsters”; and
she attempts to remember her Protestant upbringing and catechism. Once she is given
to two Squaws, who will become her Indian sisters, her treatment and her impressions
of her captors are transformed.²⁸

Jemison paints a clear picture of the cultural event known as “mourning war.”

“Mourning wars . . . arose from a cultural mandate to replace deceased relatives and
involved far-ranging, often large scale raids on rival native nations to procure captives to
either adopt or ritually torture and execute.”²⁹ These deceased relatives were often
killed during wars and conflicts with New Englanders. During Jemison’s adoption
ceremony, a speech was made by one of the members of the Seneca tribe, “Oh our
brother! Alas! He is dead . . . he died on the field of the slain. . . . His spirit went naked,
and hungry it wanders.” The speech goes on for almost a page until finally Jemison is
welcomed into the family:

His spirit has seen our distress, and sent us a helper whom with pleasure we
greet. Dickewamis (Jemison) has come: then let us receive her with joy! She is
handsome and pleasant. Oh! She is our sister, and gladly we welcome her here.
In the place of our brother she stands in our tribe. With care we will guard her
from trouble; and may she be happy till her spirit shall leave us (DS 143).

Although some captives are given to families for vengeance in the rite of mourning war
to torture and execute at their will, others, like Jemison, are given to replace lost loved
ones—here, becoming a sister in place of a dead brother. The concept of “a life for a
life” may seem antiquated, but it preceded the Calvinist concept of predestination

²⁸ Derounian-Stodola. Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives. (DS).
followed by New Englanders who asserted their right to take lands that were already occupied by and, in that sense, belonged to the Native Americans.

After her adoption, Jemison was treated as well as, if not better than, other Seneca women living among the tribe. She did not suffer any hardships, and her sisters loved her endlessly and feared greatly to lose another sibling. While she did not forget her English language or heritage, over time she grew happy with her Seneca family and content to live in the wilderness with them. As Jemison says in her narrative, “With them was my home; my family was there, and there I had many friends to whom I was warmly attached in consideration of the favors, affection and friendship with which they had uniformly treated me from the time of my adoption” (DS 148-149). She married a noble Indian, Sheninjee, by whom she had two children, and she loved him until his death two or three years into their marriage. After her first husband died of sickness, she married her second husband, Hiokatoo, whom by she had four daughters and two sons; she remained married to him until his death.

During her life among the Senecas, conflict and war were still prominent in North America, and thus English prisoners were still being brought back to their tribe after a wartime skirmish. Jemison recounts a memory of two English prisoners who were brought back to their Seneca town, Genishua, and her sister encouraging her to attend their execution. When appealing to her mother, her sister was met with reprimand, “How can you think of conducting to that melancholy spot your poor sister Dickewamis, who was so lately been a prisoner, who has lost her parents and brothers by the hands
of the bloody warriors, and who has felt all the horrors of the loss of her freedom, in lonesome captivity? Oh! How can you think of making her bleed at the wounds which now are but partially healed?” (DS 155). Jemison’s Indian mother’s outrage explicitly contradicts the more propagandistic narrative generalizations of the “barbaric heathen” that many narrators so desperately attempted to portray. Although Indians could inflict savage cruelty on their captives and their enemies, so too could all colonial and early national parties in times of war.

More Adopted Captives

In the opening paragraph of “Going Native,” the fifth chapter of his Captured by Texts, Gary Ebersole raises an important question regarding eighteenth- and nineteenth-century narratives: “Can one lose one’s own identity?” The number of white Indians being seen throughout America became troublesome for many Americans.

For millions of readers, captivity tales have been important vehicles for exploring the possibility of identity transformation. Representations of going native, including those that affirm the process and those that display abject horror over its very possibility, are responses to basic human fascination with the thought of losing or changing one’s identity (Ebersole 192-193).

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For centuries captivity narratives served as a window into the wilderness; colonists and Americans could experience the trials and adventures of living among the Indians without the actual suffering. Narratives served multiple purposes: warnings, religious proclamations, anti-Indian or anti-Jesuit propaganda, and also entertainment. However, it can be seen in later narratives that the lure of the Indian way of life and the willingness of Americans to be adopted and live among their Indian captors became a frightening reality.

For John Tanner, captured in 1785 by the Shawnee, it had been an answered request. After being harshly beaten by his father for not attending school, he often “wished he could go live among the Indians.”

Captured by Manito-o-geezhik and his son Kish-kau-to, Tanner was ten when he was taken from his father’s home in Elk Horn and carried to Sauge-nong to replace the dead son of their wife and brother. His adoption ceremony was performed on the grave of the son he was to replace, consisting of a cheerful dancing “after the manner of the scalp dance” (9). Tanner’s adoptive mother was compassionate toward him, as were many other Indians in the community, but neither of which could protect him from the wrath of his adoptive father. He was often beaten, even almost killed, by Manito-o-geezhik for his whiteness and his inability to perform duties as well as other Indians. After two years among his Shawnee family, he was given to Net-no-Kwa who had also lost her son. Net-no-Kwa, “notwithstanding

31 Tanner. A narrative of the captivity and adventures of John Tanner: 2.

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her sex,” was chief of the Ottawwaws and would provide him with a more indulgent and caring life.

Tanner and his mother traveled to Shab-a-wy-wy-a-gun, a few days journey from his home in Sau-ge-nong. Not only is his new mother able to provide him with sufficient food, clothes and protection that his first adoptive mother was not, but he is also able to form a father-son bond with his new father that he was denied with his American and first adoptive father. In Tanner’s narrative, readers are exposed to his journey to manhood while among the Indians. At the age of twelve, Tanner is encouraged by his mother and father to join the Indian children his age and hunt for pigeons. “Since I have been a man,” writes Tanner, “I have been placed in difficult situations; but my anxiety for success was never greater than in this, my first essay as a hunter” (17). His anxiety is relieved as Tanner learns he is a skilled hunter, and he is “treated with more consideration” by his peers in the community. He does, however, fail to succeed at setting traps in the winter, exposing him to “the ridicule of the young men” (18). Tanner’s father sympathizes with him, and like most natural fathers would for their sons, makes the traps for him. “As I became more and more expert and successful in hunting and trapping, I was no longer required to do the work of the women about the lodge” (19). Readers of Tanner’s narrative can see his coming of age among the Indians and their gradual acceptance of him as he learns how to successfully and properly do the work of men in his community.
John Tanner speaks highly of both his mother and his father during the course of his narrative. Though his mother was a chief, making her the dominant authority over not only the Ottawwaws but also in the family, Tanner presents his adoptive father as both strong and just. Taw-ga-we-ninne was a hunter, always “indulgent and kind” to Tanner, and treated him “like an equal, rather than as a dependent” (29). The relationship that developed between Tanner and his adoptive father is much different from the one which he desired to escape from his biological father, and especially different from his relationship with his first captor. There is mutual respect and love in the dynamic between Tanner and Taw-ga-we-ninne that was lacking with Tanner’s first two fathers.

Taw-ga-we-ninne would not live, however, to watch his new son, or any sons for that matter, grow up and become a man. During a drunken fight, Tanner’s father is pushed to the ground and hit in the head with a rock, a wound that would prove fatal for Taw-ga-we-ninne. Tanner recounts his father’s last few days in his narrative, leaving the reader with a noble image of him:

‘I am killed.’ He made me sit down with the other children, and talked much to us. He said, ‘Now, my children, I have to leave you I am sorry that I must leave you so poor.’ He said nothing to us about killing the Indian who had struck him with the stone, as some would have done. He was too good a man to wish to involve his family in the troubles which such a course would have brought upon them (20).
The man who fatally wounded Taw-ga-we-ninne would never receive justice. Just as Tanner’s father refused to encourage his sons to kill his murderer, his son, who was too sick to defend the family, encouraged his father also not to kill his murderer for fear of a vicious and violent cycle of revenge. Tanner’s father, being a fair and caring man, obliged by his son’s wishes and shortly died thereafter, loved but unavenged. The narrative offers no disrespect or shame towards Tanner’s father for not seeking revenge, but allows him to die with dignity and compassion.

Most adopted captives were taken from their families at a young age; the need for a family structure was important for a young captive. John Tanner was able to develop a bond with his adoptive father, one that is not frequently present in narratives. More often, a captive would form a strong bond with their adoptive mother, an idea known as the “cult of motherhood” (Ebersole 211). One captive, John Dunn Hunter, descriptively explains this phenomenon after his second adopted mother “who treated him with great tenderness and affection,” drowned collecting driftwood.

She was indeed a mother to me; and I feel my bosom dilate with gratitude at the recollection of her goodness, and care of me during this helpless period of my life. . . . If . . . the imagination be allowed scope, and a lad ten or twelve years of age, without kindred or name, or any knowledge by which he could arrive at an acquaintance with any of the circumstances connected with his being . . . nearly a thousand miles from any white settlement, a prisoner or sojourner among a people whom he had not the slightest claim, and with whose language, habits,
and character he was wholly unacquainted; but who nevertheless treated him kindly; it will appear not only natural but rational, that he should return such kindness with gratitude and affection.  

This was not the first, nor the second mother John Dunn Hunter had lost. The first was his biological mother, killed most likely during the raid in which the Kickapoo’s took him captive. This death would spark the necessity to replace the maternal figure with another, the Kickapoo squaw that first adopted him. His first adopted mother offered him kindness and compassion, but would be left behind in a Shawanee village while the rest of the Kickapoo tribe continued up the Marameck River. Hunter recollects being filled “with the most painful sensations” as he is separated from his mother (15-16). He is subsequently adopted into the family of Kee-nees-tah of the Kansas Indians, where he would suffer the loss of his third mother.

Adoption did not only ameliorate the Indian family’s need to replace a lost loved one, but also offered a caregiver to the distraught captive. The transition from captive to white Indian is made easier with the affection of a mother. “Texts such as these appealed to the ideological image of women as agents of the civilizing process,” writes Ebersole. “Within the nuclear family it was believed that it was the wife and mother who smoothed the rough edges of the male and otherwise softened and ameliorated the potentially destructive consequences of his brutish nature” (211). A mother, adopted or otherwise, offers a guidance and support that is needed for a developing

child. When a captive is stripped of that maternal figure after being taken from their family, it is natural that a replacement would be accepted. It is alluded to in Demos’ book when Eunice’s father is unable to protect her. Mary Jemison is offered that protection when she is adopted into her Seneca family and her mother shields her from the images of torture and death of an English prisoner. John Dunn Hunter and John Tanner experience grief at the loss of their paternal figures, and exploit a strong and supportive bond with their mothers.

The presence of a mother figure is not the only ploy used by the Indians to further wedge the divide between captive and American life. Hunter remembers being taken prisoner with two other white children, a girl that was killed for crying and a boy that he was soon separated from during the journey to the Kickapoo village. The separation of the captives was not out of “wanton cruelty” but as a way to “hasten reconciliation” to their circumstances (5). Without the presence of other white captives, the new white Indians could sooner forget their language, their religions, and their American societal norms. Becoming fully assimilated into the Indian community made the adoption process less contestable and the desire to escape less appealing. Running away from their Indian family was also hindered by the fact that most of the captive’s family would be killed during the raids. John Hunter, despite seeming content among the Indians, dwells on the decision to escape and return to civilization. “At this time I was suffered to go entirely at large, being subjected to no manner of restraint . . . but I believed my father and all my friends had been murdered, and I remembered the
laborious and confined manner in which I must life if I returned among the whites” (26). Even with the opportunity to escape, the illusion of having nowhere to go or no one to turn to forced captives to remain in the wilderness. For Tanner, it was precisely an illusion that prevented his escape; his captor had claimed to have killed his brother, bringing his hat back as evidence, but was revealed as lying and to have only taken the hat after Tanner’s brother escaped. For many other captives, however, their only hope for future truly did remain with their Indian captors.

Not all adopted captives chose to remain with their Indian families until their death. While Jemison and Eunice feared for the fate of their lives and their children’s lives if they were to return to white society, some adopted captives received a welcoming reception. Though he did not make the choice to remain with his captors, Matthew Brayton did choose to leave his Indian wife and children to return to his family in Ohio. In his narrative, Brayton tells his readers he never believed himself to be white, that the Snake Indians had stolen him from another Indian tribe of which he cannot remember. Taken at the young age of seven, Brayton remembered little to nothing of his white family or his upbringing. It is only because of English and French traders that persuade Brayton to confront the chief and send him on his journey to find his white parents.

After thirty-four years of a life among the Indian’s, “the hero of these strange adventures,” chose a civilized life with his father and brothers (68). He is a hero, because he chose to forsake his Indian life and was able to adapt readily to his new life,
attending school and learning English. John Tanner also chose to return to Kentucky with his brothers and sisters in 1817 but had difficulty adjusting to white civilization.

While in Detroit, Tanner found his original captor, Kish-Kau-to, and discovered that his brothers and sisters had not in fact been killed as Manito-o-geezhik had claimed. Though Tanner originally chose to leave his wife and children behind, he did attempt to return for and take care of his daughters sometime in the 1820s; only to have his second wife attempt to murder him and his daughters escape with her into the unknown.

Accordingly, in 1846 Tanner disappeared from Sault Saint Marie where he was working for an Indian agent; he was suspected of murdering the brother of his employer. Kee Tanner would have been about 66 at his disappearance. Though his homecoming reads as less successful than Brayton’s, his trials and adventures are still an exciting read for the audience and provide a character that elected for white civilization over savageness.

John Dunn Hunter also chose to leave his Indian family in 1816, when he would have been about nineteen or twenty years old. It is not unusual that most texts available to readers would be of captives that, though originally stayed with their captors, eventually returned to white civilization. Most adopted captives lost their English language at a young age, and would die knowing only how to speak their Indian tongue. Without the English language, the narrative of a captive would either never get published or be unreadable by the American audience. Mary Jemison had a translator, Eunice’s accounts of her experience are fictional, and Hunter, Brayton, and Tanner all

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33 Drimmer. Captured By Indians: 142-144.
eventually chose to return to their roots. The benefits of the adopted narratives, however, are that they provide readers with a less biased version of life with the Indians. Hunter’s narrative is famous for his accounts of all social, cultural, political and religious practices of not only his Indian tribe but of others as well. Noteworthy is his attention to the moral condition of the Indians:

It will be admitted on all sides, if history may be credited, that they display, according to the opportunities presented by the circumstances and modes of their lives, as great energy of mental powers, and capability of accommodating it to particular exigencies, as any other people have. The causes which operate against their increase of numbers, and the facilities with which they are in general able to supply all their wants, very much restrict, and I may say, prevent their moral advancement (199).

Hunter suggests that Indians have developed according to their circumstances, as every civilization has. Their resources, which have been made scarce and limited by war, disease, and devastation may have stunted their progress, but their actual “capability” of morality is the same as other societies.

Hunter and Jemison are both adamant in their narratives about the temperate and just nature of most Indians, before the English and Americans insistence on civilization. Narratives like Brayton’s too diminish the generalizations of all Native Americans to identify distinct characteristics of each tribe. Flat Heads tie boards to the heads of their young children to flatten their skulls in certain places (18). The Diggers
were “generally lazy and cowardly” and the Blackfeet were “the most ferocious and cruel tribes in existence” (17-18). Each tribe, including his own the Snakes, had their own religion, government, and customs that were uniquely different from other tribes near and far from them. Even when tribes joined together, such as the Snakes and the Copperheads did, the tribes would still maintain their own customs, such as marriage proposals and durations. The emersion of the white Indian and adoption narratives gave a quiet but still present voice to the Native Americans. In a genre that so easily neglected justice and convoluted the truth, these later narratives gave readers an untold side of the story.

**Fiction and Legends**

Throughout the centuries the adventures of captives and the enticement of the wilderness kept readers immersed in captivity narratives. The glamor and mystery of the frontier became a very profitable and popular concept throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, encouraging fiction writers to start capitalizing on this market. Many legends and stories have ben contrived from non-fictional narratives and historical interactions between Native Americans and Americans, “constantly borrowing descriptions and even whole action scenes from earlier travel or journal accounts” (Ebersole 100). These works have been widely read but not always as highly acclaimed by the same critics of captivity narratives.
In 1787, an author by the name of Abraham Panther would publish the fictional but widely popular *A Surprising Account of the Discovery of a Lady Who was taken by the Indians in the Year of 1777, and After Making Her Escape, She Retired to a Lonely Cave, Where She Lived Nine Years*. Published in the *Bickerstaff’s Almanac*, it was a story about two travelers who came across a sleeping lady, who is never named, in the wilderness and subsequently relates to them her story. Wanting to marry a man that her father disapproves of, the woman and her lover decide to elope and run off into the wild. Shortly after, they were attacked and taken captive by a party of Indians. Her lover was killed but she was able to make her escape where she fended for herself for weeks until she is once again apprehended by a man of “gigantic figure.”34 The man in the narrative that takes her captive is not directly identified as an Indian, but only hinted to be one. He speaks an unknown language, he eats nuts and Indian cakes, and he sleeps on a rock covered with skins. It would not be until later publishing’s of the narratives that the man is completely identified to readers as Indians (84). Refusing her captor, the lady picked up his hatchet while he slept and murdered him before escaping. She remained living off the land for nine years until the travelers convinced her to return home to civilization and her father.

The Panther captivity narrative, though fictional, maintains the important characteristics of a successful captivity narrative. The lady witnesses the savageness of the Indians as they murder her lover and dance around him, “rejoicing in their brutal

cruelty” (88). She is able to overcome her imprisonment twice, the second time not only escaping but also killing the Indian that held her captive. The woman is reminiscent of Hannah Dustan, brutally chopping off his head and then cutting him into quarters. Like Dustan, she is commended for her resourcefulness and bravery amongst the Indians and while living off the land. And most importantly, the woman in the Panther narrative is redeemed; she is returned home by the travelers to a guilt-ridden and joyous father who leaves her all his wealth after his death shortly after. This narrative represents the constant fears faced by Americans on the frontier. Not only does it address the controversy between Indians and the Americans, but can also be read as a feminist text that allows a women to take her fate into her own hands. Despite being able to save herself, the woman is still returned home by the champions of the frontier, the men.

There is no more important man to the frontier than Daniel Boone, an actual pioneer and frontiersman famous for his roles in the Revolutionary War and his exploration of Kentucky. In 1784, John Filson published “The Adventures of Colonel Daniel Boone” as a part of his book, *The Discovery and Settlement of Kentucke*. Most readers are already familiar with the exploits of Daniel Boone, and most of Filson’s accounts are truthful but embellished for a more exciting and dramatic effect. In 1769, Boone would leave his family in North Carolina head out west to the wilderness that would soon become Kentucky. During their exploration and settlement, Boone would face many hostile encounters with the Native Americans, including his own multiple
captivities with the Indians. Like most captivity narratives, Filson was generous with his application of the act of cruelty practiced by the Indians.

Not being prepared to oppose them, were obliged to surrender themselves miserable captives to barbarous savages, who immediately after tomahawked one man and two women, and loaded all the others with heavy baggage, forcing them along toward their towns, able or unable to march. Such as were weak and faint by the way, they tomahawked. The tender women, and helpless children, fell victims to their cruelty.\(^{35}\)

Despite their constant hostility, Daniel Boone is able to push continuously the Indians out of their land in Kentucky and provide a settlement for his wife and children.

Filson’s portrayal of Boone is that of a hero in the captivity narrative sense. He is taken captive multiple times and resourceful enough to escape. He defeats the Indians during many encounters and retains his family’s safety and new home. Boone’s voice in Filson’s adventures sounds typical of an American invested in their expansion westward. After their defeat the Indians are “made sensible” of white “superiority.” The end reads almost like a Puritan captivity narrative: “What thanks, what ardent and ceaseless thanks are due to that all-superintending Providence which has turned a cruel war into peace, brought order out of confusion, made the fierce savages placid, and turned away their hostile weapons from our country!”\(^{36}\) Not only does Boone graciously thank god in his adventures, according to Filson, but he maintains that the Indians were meant to be

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36 From Life and Adventures of Colonel Daniel Boon, an EBook with no page numbers.
tamed, that they were destroying “his” country and Americans had no choice but to
defeat them at war. Filson’s accounts of Boone’s adventures would have clearly been
welcomed by Americans who were beginning to understand their identity and their right
to American soil.

Though one of the most popular, John Filson’s tales about Boone’s adventures
would not be the only works of fiction based on reality. James Fenimore Cooper would
go on to write *The Leatherstocking Tales* in 1827, a five part series finished in 1841
written around his fictional character Natty Bumppo, also loosely based on the
adventures of Daniel Boone and his life. Charles Brockden Brown would capitalize on
the popularity of Indian captivity in 1799 in his book *Edgar Huntly, Or, Memoirs of a
Sleepwalker*, which featured the main character killing an Indian and saving a young girl
from the Lenni-Lenape tribe. Samuel Goodrich would go on to use the memoirs of John
Dunn Hunter’s narratives for his novelette about a white Indian, “Jumping Rabbit Story,”
serialized in *Robert Merry’s Museum* in 1843, a magazine geared towards children.
There was no limit to what a fictional captivity narrative could portray. Indian cruelty
spoke to all readers of all ages, brought all early Americans worst fears to life, and saw
the triumph over these fears.

**Effects and Conclusion**

Although the popularity of captivity narratives began to wane by the end of the
nineteenth century, the narratives did not completely disappear. Their influence
remained powerful on texts even into the twentieth century. Movies and books such as
*Dances with Wolves* (1988 and 1990), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1827) along with its
many movie adaptations, and *Blood Meridian* (1985) all take on the effects that Native
Americans had on Americans on the frontier. Because of their close proximity, Indians
have played a large role on our culture today and helping to shape American
entertainment and life.

Even today, Americans continue to read and study Native American captivity
narratives. Not only have they been used as a source of reference, but have been used
to attract the American audience through entertainment, whether fiction, poetry, plays
or movies. Ebersole writes in his concluding chapter on captivity texts:

We continue to be captured by captivity texts and images from the past,
imbricated in a complex intertextual history of narrations and readings that
create and recreate diverse and even contradictory meanings of the loss of
autonomy, suffering, human identity, and authenticity. The captivity topos
continues to be employed as a means of imaginatively reflecting on the
possibility of identity transformation and going native, while the wilderness of
the Indian-as-Other remain important imaginative constructs through which we
project our fears, fantasies, and nostalgias onto the world (239).

Indian captivity narratives have helped Americans form their own unique identity.
William Carlos Williams, in his prose piece *In the American Grain* (1925), he focuses on
the development of America and the formation of its own unique identity. His pages are
plagued with Indians and captivity, including an essay surrounding the life of Daniel Boone and the discovery of Kentucky. He claims the “the average American to be Indian, but an Indian robbed of his world.” Williams; suggestion of the likeness of Americans and Indians lends to the importance of captivity narratives. These narratives provided the binary that was is suggested by Cathy Rex that was important not only to New Englanders, but also to Americans. There must be a distinct difference between Indian/American, Savage/Civilized just as there is difference between “machines and forest.”

Starting with the Puritan captivity narrative, this inescapable genre was used as a warning to other Puritans to fear the Indians in this new land. It was also a prime way to glorify God, to suffer at his hands, and allow oneself to be saved by him and then tell the story. Narratives like John Williams’ and Mary Rowlandson’s made captivity a religious experience, a chance to capitalize on God’s anger and grace. As Puritanism began to wane, so did the use of narratives to sing the Lord’s praise. They then became a tool to spark anti-Indian propaganda, to encourage further westward expansion, and to continue to fear Indians. They fueled a strong sense of nationalism that pitted Americans in opposition of not only Indians but any other nation against them. Adopted captives would cause anxiety among Americans, but would never destroy the American-ness that would develop over those two centuries. Though the popularity of the

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37 Williams. *In the American Grain*: 128.
38 Taken from *In the American Grain*: 128.
captivity narrative genre eventually disintegrated, it is still an important part of American culture and identity.
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