



"The French Sail to the River of May." Original picture (now lost) by Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues. Engraved and published by Theodor de Bry in *Brevis Narratio* [*A Brief Narrative*], Frankfurt-on-Main (Germany): T. de Bry, 1591. Part II of de Bry's series *Great Voyages*. The engraving shows French explorers arriving in Florida in 1562. By permission of the British Library.

The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550–1900

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of the "Indian Wars," the conflict was, in part, an attempt to stop the continued influence of the Ghost Dance religion, based on teachings of the Paiute medicine man Wovoka.

- 1893 Frederick Jackson Turner first advances his "frontier hypothesis." Cherokee Strip in Oklahoma open to European-American settlement.
- 1897 Charlotte Alice Baker, *True Stories of New England Captives*

Chapter One

The Captivity Tradition in Fact and Fiction

"This was *Indian Captivity!*"

—Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702)

In *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Nathaniel Hawthorne mentions that Roger Chillingworth had "been long held in bonds among the heathen-folk" and that his Indian captors, after a lengthy period of assimilating him into their culture, had accompanied him to Boston "to be redeemed out of [his] captivity." While this narrative detail can be easily overlooked today, its significance would not have been missed during Hawthorne's time. Like generations of American readers before them, Hawthorne's audiences would have been thoroughly familiar with stories of Indian captivity, and they would immediately have grasped the implications of Hawthorne's subsequent description of the "savage costume" Chillingworth wore and the fact that "during his Indian captivity" he was rumored to have "enlarged his medical attainments by joining in the incantations of savage priests" and to have willingly dabbled in "the black art" of their medicinal experiments with "native herbs and roots."¹ Indoctrinated to fear American Indian culture as the antithesis of everything civilized, they would have equated Chillingworth's captivity with the loss not just of civilization but possibly of salvation itself, for to them Chillingworth had forfeited his soul to the wilderness and ultimately to the devil.

Frequency of Indian Captivity

The Indian captivity that supposedly befell Chillingworth after his shipwreck along the New England coast was not simply an isolated incident that Hawthorne extracted from colonial history to inject verisimilitude into his novel. From the beginnings of European exploration and settlement in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through the end of the nineteenth century, Indian captivity was very much a histor-

ical reality for countless explorers and settlers living on the edge of the American frontier, and in one form or other it touched the imaginations and fears of virtually everyone for whom it was a possibility. In *Letters from an American Farmer* (1752), J. Hector Sr. John de Crèvecoeur lists Indian captivity among the worst "distresses of a frontier man," and he bemoans the fact that by the end of the eighteenth century literally "thousands of Europeans are Indians."² As Colin G. Calloway has aptly pointed out, "From seventeenth-century Massachusetts to twentieth-century Hollywood, Indian captivity has been regarded as a fate worse than death, and western frontiersmen advocated saving the last bullet for oneself to prevent it."³

Conservative estimates place the number of captives taken by Indians in the tens of thousands. In her study of the subject, Emma Coleman records the names of more than 750 New England captives taken to Canada during the French and Indian Wars alone, and she estimates that thousands more, whose names are lost, may either have died along the way or been adopted by the Indians.⁴ A more recent survey compiled by Alden Vaughan and Daniel Richter documents that 1,641 New England settlers were known to have been captured by Indians between 1675 and 1763.⁵ Although exact figures remain unavailable for later periods, a high frequency of Indian captivity continued until well into the latter part of the nineteenth century. According to Wilcomb E. Washburn of the Smithsonian Institute, "an estimated 900 to 1,000 Mexican captives, and a much smaller though not insignificant number of Anglo captives, were among the Comanches in 1850."⁶ Presuming that many more captives must have been taken than retained by the Comanches, one can assume that the incidence of captivity among this single Western tribe must have been well into the thousands. As statistical research continues, other Western tribes such as the Apache and Sioux will no doubt be shown to have trafficked in similarly large numbers of captives. Hence, when Rip Van Winkle failed to return from an afternoon excursion into the Catskills, his friends and relatives could indeed logically assume that he had been "carried away by the Indians,"⁷ for such had been the fate of many European settlers during Van Winkle's day.

Reasons for Taking Captives

Indians took captives for several reasons. One major reason was revenge. Angry at Europeans who stole their lands and massacred them in wars, Indians sometimes retaliated by subjecting enemy captives to

ritualistic ceremonies of torture and death. A seventeenth-century Jesuit missionary captured by Mohawks in New France, Isaac Jogues mentions that male captives in their twenties were routinely tortured and killed, particularly if they were "full of life and courage." Such captives were "generally put to death," Jogues records, as a way "to sap as it were the life-blood of the hostile tribe" or to serve as a sacrificial offering to the *manes*, or spirit, of a slain warrior. Jogues was himself selected "to be offered" in this way but was spared when his captors brought in other prisoners who were sacrificed instead.⁸

One way in which Indians purportedly avenged themselves against their enemies involved burning a prisoner at the stake. This activity, usually presented in gruesome detail though almost certainly not as frequently or flagrantly practiced as many captivity authors would have their audiences believe, appears with such regularity in the captivity narratives that it becomes almost a stock feature. Other ritualistic forms of torture and death that Indians reportedly practiced on their captives included mutilation, dismemberment, decapitation, and cannibalism.⁹ All of these activities are described by Rachel Plummer, who was taken captive in 1836 by the Comanches in Texas. According to Plummer, "These inhuman cannibals will eat the flesh of a human being, and talk of their bravery or abuse their cowardice with as much unconcern as if they were mere beasts." In fact, she states, "they appear to be very fond of human flesh. The hand or foot they say is the most delicious."¹⁰

Most of these tortures were reserved for adult male captives. Because captives were tortured primarily to avenge the death of Indian warriors, adult men were generally considered the appropriate object of Indian vengeance. There were, however, undoubtedly instances of female captives being tortured and killed, and one issue that remains beneath the surface of most narratives is whether such captives were sexually violated by the Indians. Except in the most egregious examples of narratives whose value as anti-Indian propaganda was being exploited by the press, most female captives either remained silent about any sexual abuse they may have experienced while in captivity or explicitly commented that their Indian captors respected their chastity. Writing in the seventeenth century, the Puritan captive Mary Rowlandson marvels, "I have been in the midst of those roaring Lyons, and Salvage Bears, that feared neither God, nor Man, nor the Devil, by night and day, alone and in company: sleeping all sorts together, and yet not one of them ever offered me the least abuse of unchastity to me, in word or action."¹¹ The eighteenth-century Quaker captive Elizabeth Hanson likewise maintains that the

Indians were "very civil toward their captive Women, not offering any incivility by any indecent Carriage (unless they be much overgone in Liquor), which is commendable in them so far."¹²

Such a view may not, in many instances, have been mere rhetoric to protect the captive's reputation once she had returned home. Evidence strongly suggests that Eastern tribes showed little sexual interest in their female captives. As Calloway explains, "Indians embarking on the war-path practised sexual abstinence lest their war medicine become 'contaminated'; additionally, they may have found white women unattractive." Calloway also indicates another powerful reason why Indian warriors usually respected the chastity of their female captives: "Should a captive be adopted into the tribe, she might become a member of the warrior's family, and he would not risk infringing incest taboos by forcing himself on a woman who soon might become his 'sister'" (Calloway, 203). While these practices seem later to have changed among Western tribes who came to emulate white society's less civilized war practices, they were evidently widely observed in the East, at least during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For this reason, sexual abuse is less commonly mentioned or alluded to in Eastern narratives while it becomes a more frequent subject of discussion in Western ones.

Because distraught family and friends willingly paid whatever they could to regain their loved ones, ransom was a second major motive for Indians to take captives. In exchange for Mary Rowlandson, who was captured in 1675 during a raid on the Massachusetts town of Lancaster, the Indians demanded and received £20, an amount that equalled the annual income of a middle-class worker. Lonnie J. White notes that in 1867 "the military at Fort Arbuckle, Indian Territory, paid \$210.00 in cash and \$20.00 worth of uniforms for [Theodore Adolphus] Dot and \$333.00 for Luella [Dot's sister]," who had been captured by Comanches the previous year.¹³ General Samuel Houston is said to have paid \$150.00 for the release of Elizabeth Kellog, who had been captured by Kiowas and Comanches during the 1830s in Texas.¹⁴ Washburn points out that "ransoms as high as \$2,000.00 were sometimes paid for captives who thus served as the economic equivalent of a large amount of guns, liquor, or other durable goods" (Washburn, "Introduction," xviii). To help captives' families raise funds, local governments sometimes established trusts specifically for ransoming captives. Such was the case, for example, during the French and Indian Wars in New England when the French in Canada furthered the war effort by offering the Indians money

for English captives, thus creating a market between the French and English for captives and raising to exorbitant amounts the money needed for ransom. In fact, the high ransom captives could bring may have significantly reduced the number of captives who were ritualistically tortured and slain (Calloway, 195).

A third reason why American Indians took captives was to replace tribal numbers diminished by war and disease brought on by white colonization. As Calloway notes, "Among some of the Iroquois tribes to the west, adoption became such a vital means of replenishing the losses occasioned by constant warfare that adoptees came to outnumber pure-blooded Iroquois" (194). So common was this practice that adoption into the tribe, rather than torture and death, was the fate that most captives could reasonably expect. Taken captive in 1790 by Shawnees and Cherokees near the juncture of the Ohio and Scioto Rivers, Charles Johnston explains, "Among all the savage nations of America, the usage prevails, of adopting prisoners taken in war for the purpose of supplying any loss incurred by those, who have had their friends slain in battle, or otherwise."¹⁵ Such captives were usually treated well. According to Jogues, once adopted, a captive "is subject thenceforward to no man's orders excepting those of the head of the family, who, to acquire this right, offers some presents" (Jogues, 20).

Many adopted captives grew to love their Indian families and opposed leaving them even when given the opportunity to do so. Writing in 1747 about captives who refused to leave the Indians, Cadwallader Colden records, "No Arguments, no Intreaties, nor Tears of their Friends and Relations, could persuade many of them to leave their own *Indian* Friends and Acquaintance[s]; several of them that were by the Caressings of their Relations persuaded to come Home, in a little Time grew tired of our Manner of living, and run away again to the *Indians*, and ended their Days with them."¹⁶ Similarly, of some 200 captives redeemed through a 1764 treaty that Colonel Henry Bouquet negotiated with the Delawares and Shawnees at the close of the war with Pontiac, all but a few violently resisted leaving their Indian homes. "Unless they are closely watch'd," predicted Lieutenant Governor Francis Fauquier of Virginia, "they will certainly return to the Barbarians," and that is exactly what these captives did as soon as the first convenient opportunity arose (quoted by Axtell, "White Indians," 61).

For obvious reasons, children were the most likely candidates for adoption. In general less prejudiced and more culturally malleable than adults, children were more easily assimilated into the tribe. As James

Axtell explains, "The Indians obviously chose their captives carefully so as to maximize the chances of acculturating them to Indian life" (Axtell, "White Indians," 61). Girls in particular adjusted well to Indian life. Using Vaughan and Richrer's study of New England captives, Washburn notes that "girls aged 7 through 15 were the most likely of all groups to be 'transcultured'" and that "almost 54 percent of this group refused to return to New England compared with less than 30 percent of the boys in the same age group" (Washburn, "Introduction," xvii). After an elaborate "educational process" designed to transform them into "affectionate Indian relatives," many of these captives chose to live their entire lives as Indians (Axtell, "White Indians," 66).

Such was the case, for example, with Mary Jemison (Dehgewanus), perhaps the most famous example of a white captive become Indian. Jemison was approximately 12 years old in 1755 when Shawnees attacked her home near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, killing her parents and taking her captive. After an initial period of lament and regret, she embraced the culture of the Seneca family that adopted her. Remembered as the "white woman of the Genesee," she grew up in the Genesee River Valley of western New York, was twice married to Indian chiefs, and became a leader of her adopted tribe. She died in 1833 at age 90 and quickly became the subject of legend and folklore. An elegy written in her honor and published in 1844 records that Jemison "lov'd the Indian style of life."

Other examples of famous captives who also adjusted to Indian culture include Frances Slocum (We-let-a-wash), Eunice Williams, Cynthia Ann Parker, and John Tanner (Sha-shew-wabe-na-se). Remembered by her white family as the "lost sister of Wyoming," Frances Slocum was taken captive in 1778 by Delaware Indians who attacked her family's homestead in the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania, near the present site of Wilkes-Barre. Upon discovery by white society more than 50 years later, Slocum steadfastly refused to leave her Indian family. When urged by her white relations to "go back with us," Slocum replied:

"No I cannot. I have always lived with the Indians. They have always used me very kindly. I am used to them. The Great Spirit has always allowed me to live with them, and I wish to live and die with them. Your *Wah-puh-mone* (looking-glass) may be larger than mine, but this is my home. I do not wish to live any better, or any where else, and I think the Great Spirit has permitted me to live so long, because I have always lived with the Indians. I should have died sooner if I had left them. My husband and my boys are buried here, and I cannot leave

them. On his dying day my husband charged me not to leave the Indians. I have a house, and large lands, two daughters, a son-in-law, three grandchildren, and everything to make me comfortable. Why should I go, and be like a fish out of the water?"¹⁷

Slocum chose to stay with the Indians for the remainder of her life. In the words of her biographer, the Reverend John Todd, "She had, to all intents and purposes, become an Indian" (*Sister*, 104).

Eunice Williams was taken captive during a raid on Deerfield, Massachusetts, on 29 February 1704. With her parents and two brothers, she was forced to march to Canada. Two younger sisters were killed during the attack, and her mother died shortly after the journey began. While her brothers and her father, who was the Puritan minister of Deerfield, were later ransomed, Eunice remained among the Indians, converted to Roman Catholicism, and married into the tribe. In later life, she and her Indian family returned to Massachusetts, but legend has it that she refused to enter her brother's house because their father had remarried.¹⁸ In a final, unsuccessful effort to redeem her, the minister preached a sermon to her on the lawn. A memorial plaque in a Deerfield museum simply records that after being taken captive by Indians Eunice Williams "married a Savage and became one."

Even more dramatic were the captivities of Parker and Tanner. Captured in May 1836, Cynthia Ann Parker was 19 when a Comanche war party raided the Texas settlement where her family lived. Within a short time, however, she grew to appreciate Comanche culture. After marrying one of their chiefs, she bore three children, one of whom, Quanah Parker, himself became a legendary tribal hero. Although she repeatedly resisted the efforts of white negotiators to rescue her, Parker was eventually brought back to her white family by Texas rangers who came upon her while she was butchering buffalo meat. After several unsuccessful attempts to return to the Indians, she allegedly died of grief. At her funeral, her son is reported to have said that she loved the "Indian and wild life so well" that she had no desire whatsoever "to go back to white folks."¹⁹ Captured in 1789 at age nine by Shawnees and later sold to Ojibwas, John Tanner so enjoyed his life as hunter and trapper among the Indians along the Minnesota and Canadian border that when white civilization began to assimilate the culture of his captors he grew sullen and violent. In 1846, Tanner is said to have destroyed his home near Sault Ste. Marie, murdered James Schoolcraft (brother of the Indian ethnologist Henry Rowe Schoolcraft), and fled into the wilderness, where he forever disap-

peared, despite pursuit by a posse and bloodhounds. His wife, a white woman from Detroit, had previously deserted him because of his brutality.²⁰

Finally, Indians took captives for use as slaves. Those captives who were not immediately killed or adopted were often held as slaves. In such cases, the Indian who first seized the captive was usually considered the captive's owner. Remarking on the servile fate of two children taken captive with her in 1860 on the Oregon Trail near Fort Laramie, Emeline Fuller states, "The Indians were seen leading the two little girls with collars around their necks, and chains to them to lead them by. A thousand pities that they had not all been killed with their parents."²¹ Commenting on the fate of a family taken captive by the French and Indians during the 1750s, Robert Eastburn, also a captive, wrote, "Here also, I saw one Mr. Johnson, who was taken in a Time of Peace, with his Wife, and three small Children (his wife was big with a Fourth, delivered on the road to Canada, which she called *Captive*) all which, had been prisoners between three and four Years, several young Men, and his Wife's Sister, were likewise taken *Captive* with them, and made *Slaves!*"²² Becoming a slave did not, however, preclude the possibility of ransom or adoption at a later date. Such was the case, for example, with John Dunn Hunter, purportedly held by Kickapoos in the early part of the nineteenth century: "I was adopted into the family of one of the principal warriors, named Fongoh, who claimed me as his property, from having taken me prisoner; his wife, a squaw of an intermediate stature, and dark complexion, proved to me a kind and affectionate mother."²³

Defining the Captivity Narrative

So extensive and so interwoven into the very fabric of early American culture was the experience of Indian captivity that a substantial body of literature was written about the subject. Known collectively as Indian captivity narratives, these works are so numerous that the full corpus of texts has yet to be identified. In *The Voice of the Old Frontier*, R. W. G. Vail compiled a descriptive bibliography of some 250 Indian captivity narratives.²⁴ Vail's study was limited primarily to works first published before 1800. Two additional bibliographies of captivity narratives contained in the Edward Ayer Collection of the Newberry Library, which houses the largest single repository of captivity texts, expand Vail's list by several hundred items.²⁵ Also compiled at the Newberry, a more recent unpublished checklist contains more than 2,000 items and is by no means

exhaustive. In an attempt to standardize the canon, Alden T. Vaughan published a checklist of 281 titles.²⁶ The best known of these works, including various editions that involve substantial reworking of the same narrative, have been published in 111 volumes by Garland Press, thus making readily available the texts of the more standard narratives.²⁷

Part of the problem bibliographers have experienced in identifying and cataloguing Indian captivity narratives stems from the difficult problem of defining exactly what the term *Indian captivity narrative* means. In attempting to catalogue the subject, Vaughan limits his list to works "that presumably record with some degree of verisimilitude the experiences of non-Indians who were captured by American Indians" and that were "printed separately in book or pamphlet form" (Vaughan, *Bibliography*, viii). As a basic guide for categorizing the most significant of the captivity narratives, this definition is appropriate. It aptly defines what we would consider the "classic" captivity narrative reduced to its most basic form: a single narrative whose primary focus is to record the experiences of individuals of European or African origin who had actually been captured by American Indians. Three narratives, for example, are known to have been written about the experiences of African Americans. They are *A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings, and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man* (1760), *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black* (1785), and *The Life and Adventures of Nat Love* (1907). This definition also includes often overlooked narratives written and published in languages other than English. The narratives in the seventeenth-century *Jesuit Relations*, for instance, written in French, illuminate an important aspect of the captivity tradition, as do such works as *Die Erzählungen von Maria Le Roy und Barbara Leininger, Welche Vierthalb Jahr unter den Indianern Gefangen Gewesen* (*The Narrative of Marie Le Roy and Barbara Leininger*, 1759), *Erzählung Eines unter den Indianern Gewesener Gefangenen* (*The Captivity of Abraham Urssenbacher*, 1761), and *Merkwürdige und Interessante Lebensgeschichte der Frau von Wallwille, Welche Vier Jahre Lang en Einen Irokesen Verbeyrathet War* (*The Remarkable and Interesting Life Story of Maria Wallwille, Who Was Married to an Iroquois Indian for Four Years*, 1809), originally dictated in German, about the captivities of German immigrants in Pennsylvania during the French and Indian Wars.

Inevitably, however, as the subject of Indian captivity is further probed, this definition must be expanded. A complete discussion of the captivity narrative must, for instance, include the hundreds of fictitious narratives on the subject. Many of these narratives were initially accepted

as truthful and constitute a dimension of the literary tradition that often reveals more about the historical response of Americans to the captivity experience than do verifiable tales. So, too, should the captivity novels of James Fenimore Cooper, William Gilmore Simms, and Robert Montgomery Bird be considered part of the captivity tradition, as should oral tales about the captivities of such legendary American folk heroes as Tim Murphy and Tom Quick, whose exploits, most likely fictitious, were for generations circulated among the folk and only later recorded in writing.

And, finally, a definition of the captivity narrative must account for those narratives published as parts of other works, often written about other subjects. Some of the most widely discussed captivities—those of Captain John Smith, Hannah Dustan, and Daniel Boone, for example—were published not as narratives in themselves but as episodes in books primarily devoted to other subjects. The legendary story of his rescue by Pocahontas first appears in John Smith's *Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624), and the story of how Hannah Dustan slew and scalped her Indian captors while they slept was originally recorded by Cotton Mather to conclude his sermon, *Humiliations Follow'd with Deliverances* (1697). What is known about Boone's purported captivity among the Shawnees is recorded in John Filson's *Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke* (1784) and later embellished in Timothy Flint's *Biographical Memoir of Daniel Boone* (1833). Although only one of these narratives, Hannah Dustan's, can be verified in the historical record and although none of them were published individually as books or pamphlets devoted exclusively to the subject of Indian captivity, these narratives constitute an important part of the tradition and are included in most major discussions of the subject.

Authorship

Yet another vexing issue that must be addressed when discussing captivity narratives is the question of authorship. Assessing exactly who wrote what is far more complicated than it might appear. Considering later narratives alone, Roy Harvey Pearce observes, "the problem of authenticity in some of the narratives of the first half of the nineteenth century is hopelessly confused."²⁸ Indeed, distinguishing historically verifiable first-person accounts from edited or fictionalized ones is often impossible owing to multiple authorial contributions, unclear publishing conditions and copyright, and generic overlap within and between works. Some narratives are indeed first-person accounts told in a single

clear voice and verifiable in the historical record. There is no reason, for instance, to doubt that John Williams, the Puritan minister of Deetfield, Massachusetts, when it was attacked by Indians in 1704, was not in fact the author of *The Redeemed Captive, Returning to Zion* (1707), the much publicized account of his subsequent captivity. But first-person writing by no means guarantees historical credibility. In fact, by the latter half of the eighteenth century, the historicity of any narrative written in the first person becomes suspect because, in imitation of the novel, wholly fictional narratives were customarily expected to use various strategies to appear factual. Thus, James Russell's fictionalized *Matilda: or, the Indian's Captive* (1833) has as its subtitle, "A Canadian Tale, Founded on Fact," and Russell states in its preface, "I am truly at a loss (Reader) what name to give this little work; to call it a Novel is an appellation which in some measure it does not deserve, as it is founded on fact."²⁹

Even more baffling, however, are works where the line between fact and fiction is totally unclear. Written in the first person, John Dunn Hunter's *Manners and Customs of Several Indian Tribes Located West of the Mississippi* (1823) was long thought to be the account of an authentic captivity. A popular narrative, it was circulated throughout Europe and translated into German, Dutch, and Swedish. Recent research, however, calls into question the very existence of Hunter.³⁰ On the other hand, authorities long considered fictitious the first-person *Memoirs of Charles Dennis Rusoe d'Eres* (1800), about a Canadian captivity among the "Scanyawtauragabroote" Indians, because of the strange-sounding Indian tribe and because it mentions such unlikely details as a North American "monkey." Ethnological investigation, however, has uncovered the fact that *Scanyawtauragabroote* may simply be a white approximation of the Indian word *Skantardaradibronnon*, indicating "those who live across the river." Should that river be the Niagara, the word *Scanyawtauragabroote* may be a generic reference to "Canadian" Indians. Similarly, the "monkey" may have been nothing other than a flying squirrel or a bit of false information taken to expand the narrative from such sources as Jonathan Carver's *Travels through the Interior Parts of North-America* (1778).³¹ Appropriations of this kind were common to many captivity accounts. Therefore, contrary to what was once thought, Rusoe d'Eres's *Memoirs* may indeed record an actual captivity.

More often than not the individual captivity narrative constitutes an amalgamation of voices and input, each with its own agenda and design. In such instances, identifying the author responsible for a given section of the narrative or, for that matter, sometimes the narrative as a whole,

is extremely difficult, especially when editors become involved, who many times did not simply write the basic story but actually reoriented it as they saw it. One noteworthy example of authorial ambiguity involves complementary narratives by two women who journeyed West together on a wagon train bound for Idaho. In 1864, Fanny Kelly and Sarah L. Larimer were captured by Oglala Sioux in Wyoming, along with other members of their party. Kelly remained a captive for five months, but Larimer and her son escaped within days. Despite her brief captivity, Larimer published a 252-page volume, *The Capture and Escape; or, Life among the Sioux* (1870), padding her experiences with anthropological and historical information from other sources.³² In her conclusion, she claims authenticity—"All that is not the result of personal observation has been gleaned from reliable sources" (SL, 251)—then promises as a sequel the story of her sister-in-suffering, Fanny Kelly, "For want of space in this volume, which is already larger than was originally intended, I am compelled to omit the particulars of her sufferings, privations and ransom, but give them, as related by herself in a book entitled 'Mrs. Kelly's Experience among the Indians'" (SL, 252).

Kelly's story appeared a year later, titled *Narrative of My Captivity among the Sioux Indians*, but it carried her own name—not Larimer's—and its preface included a startling expose of Larimer's attempts to appropriate Kelly's story: "Some explanation is due the public for the delay in publishing this my narrative. From memoranda, kept during the period of my captivity, I had completed the work for publication, when the manuscript was purloined and published; but the work was suppressed before it could be placed before the public. After surmounting many obstacles, I have at last succeeded in gathering the scattered fragments."³³ From the length of Kelly's work, from her prefatory remarks, and from verbatim passages in both narratives, it seems that Larimer did plagiarize Kelly's work and was about to mine her friend's manuscript still deeper when stopped by litigation.³⁴ Nonetheless, determining who wrote what in these two narratives is virtually impossible and certainly calls into question the authenticity of at least one, if not both, works.

A still more complex authorship scenario can be found in a series of narratives published from 1838 to 1851 about three Texas pioneers captured by Comanches: Caroline Harris, Clarissa Plummer, and Sarah Ann Horn. Harris's narrative appeared in 1838 told in the first person but intertwining Plummer's story with her own.³⁵ Embedded in the middle of her story is a particularly sensationalized summary of Plum-

mer's "harsh and cruel treatment" that leads to the following sales pitch: "Mrs. Plummer (as the writer has been recently informed) is about preparing a Narrative of her Captivity, Sufferings, &c. for the press; to that we would refer our readers for a more particular account of her heavy trials and afflictions" (CH, 17). Did Harris really compose this advertisement on behalf of her "sister captive" (CH, 16), or did an editor or publisher insert it—and perhaps other material—in the story? The same year, Plummer's account duly appeared (before readers' memories could fade), carrying this reminder on its title page: "Mrs. Plummer was made prisoner and held in bondage at the same time with the unfortunate Mrs. Harris, with whose narrative the public have been recently presented."³⁶ Predictably, the same dual narrative strategy is evident here as in the Harris book because both women shared similar fates.

One year later, a man identified as "E. House" served as Sarah Ann Horn's "amanuensis"—as he says in her preface—because she "could not be induced to write it herself for publication."³⁷ The account is, however, presented in the first person and includes constant references to Harris, with whom Horn was supposedly captured. Yet if Plummer and Harris were taken together, as their narratives claim, and if Horn and Harris were also taken together, why do none of the narratives mention all three women together? Was one of them capitalizing on the name recognition of another? Harris is the only constant in these three narratives, as well as in a fourth, *An Authentic and Thrilling Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Horn . . . with Mrs. Harris* (1851), which is actually a revised, shortened, edition of the 1839 volume. This time, though, there is no reference to an "E. House," and the title page claims that the book is "Published by the Author."³⁸ A comparison of the 1839 and 1851 editions of the Horn story shows that background material and some of the more sensationalized incidents have been condensed or omitted from the latter book; in accordance with its title, it does *seem* more "authentic," but no one will probably ever know for certain.

To evaluate with certainty the historicity of any given text, then, requires the combined skills of historians, biographers, bibliographers, and textual critics. For this reason, the reader of captivity narratives must be extremely cautious when delving into these materials for historical or ethnological data. Ultimately, inferences should not be determined or differentiated by the vehicle of their presentation unless a thorough study has been completed concerning the background of the narrative. Any investigation of the captivity narratives must, therefore, be text- and culture-based, not author-based, because authorship is so problematical.

Popularity of Captivity Narratives

Despite difficulties of definition and authorship, narratives of Indian captivity share one thing: they were immensely, even phenomenally, popular. As Richard VanDerBeets explains, "First editions are rare today because they were quite literally read to pieces, and most narratives went through a remarkable number of editions" (VanDerBeets, *Held Captive*, xi). Washburn notes that "four captivity narratives—Rowlandson, John Williams, Jonathan Dickinson, and Mary Jemison—are listed by Frank Luther Mott," the noted historian of popular American literature, "as among the great best-sellers of American publishing" (Washburn, "Introduction," xi). Indeed, at the time of its publication in 1682, Rowlandson's *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God* was second in popularity among American readers only to the Bible, and it quickly established another audience in Europe, where it was published in the same year.³⁹ John Williams's *The Redeemed Captive, Returning to Zion* (1707) is estimated to have sold 1,000 copies during the first week after its publication (Calloway, 190).

Similarly, *The Remarkable Adventures of Jackson Jobonnet*, first published around 1791, is known to have been printed in some 15 different editions before 1820 and to have been reprinted in newspapers and almanacs as well as in several popular anthologies of frontier literature. *An Account of the Captivity of Elizabeth Hanson* also illustrates the tremendous popularity that captivity narratives enjoyed both in the Americas and abroad. First published in 1728 by Samuel Keimer of Philadelphia with a simultaneous printing in New York, the story of the Kickapoo capture of Hanson, her four children, and a maid and their subsequent journey to Canada during the French and Indian Wars was printed in 13 editions before 1800. Within a few years after its publication in the Colonies, Hanson's narrative, like Mary Rowlandson's, was also printed and reprinted in London. During the nineteenth century, moreover, it was reprinted in 16 editions of Samuel Gardner Drake's *Indian Captivities* (1839–1872) and three editions of James Wimer's *Events in Indian History* (1841, 1842, 1843).⁴⁰ These narratives are by no means exceptions to the rule: the public simply could not read enough about Indian captivity. From the late seventeenth through to the end of the nineteenth centuries, captivity narratives about hundreds of captives among every major American Indian tribe were published, distributed, and read in virtually all sections of the country.

It is easy to understand why the captivity story had such popular

appeal for early American audiences: "It combined dramatic form, thrilling adventure, exotic context, and personal relevance" (Washburn, "Introduction," xi). As long as Indians remained a viable threat to frontier settlement, white readers naturally wondered what "fearful things," in the words of Cotton Mather, happened to the "multitudes of families" unfortunate enough to be "dragg'd into the forlorn and howling wigwams of those wretched salvages."⁴¹ Writing in the midnineteenth century about the captivity of Mary Jemison, James Everett Seaver summarized the omnipresent curiosity of early American audiences about Indian captivity:

These horrid tales required not the aid of fiction, or the persuasive powers of rhetoric, to heighten their colorings, or gain credence to their shocking truths. In those days, Indian barbarities were the constant topic of the domestic fireside, the parlor, the hall, and the forum. It is presumed that, at this time, there are but few native citizens that have passed the middle age who do not distinctly recollect the hearing of such frightful accounts of Indian barbarities, oft repeated, in the nursery and in the family circle, until it almost caused their hair to stand erect, and deprived them of the power of motion.⁴²

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, moreover, an additional factor contributed to the popularity of captivity narratives as a literary form. As Vail points out, "Our American ancestors did not believe in play-acting or the corrupting influence of the novel, so they limited themselves to true tales of horror in the form of deathbed confessions, stories of shipwreck, piracy, plague, and disaster, and of Indian captivity and torture" (Vail, 24). Captivity narratives were, simply put, "the escape literature of our ancestors" (Vail, 26).

Historical Phases and Cultural Adaptations

But captivity narratives did much more than merely entertain. As Roy Harvey Pearce first noted, the captivity narrative was a "vehicle for various historically and culturally individuated purposes" (Pearce, "Significances," 1947, 1). Throughout their long and complex history, they served Euro-American culture in a variety of ways. In theme, form, style, and purpose, Indian captivity narratives underwent a series of major and minor phases of development. These phases—beginning in the sixteenth century with European exploratory tracts that contained episodes about Indian captivity and extending through the nineteenth century, when

the captivity theme was appropriated by novelists such as James Fenimore Cooper and Mark Twain—evolved sequentially and were shaped by the needs of the times. Although the phases within this progression often intersected and distinctions between phases frequently become blurred, they still provide the most generally accepted means for understanding an extraordinarily complex literary and historical tradition.⁴³

It must, however, always be remembered that while the narratives may in general have been written and shaped by larger cultural concerns, marketability was also a major motive behind the publication, and in many instances, the writing of narratives from all periods. In addition, authors themselves often had personal motives for writing that may or may not have conformed to the cultural and economic forces that came to bear on the telling of their stories. Sometimes these motives were subconscious, as in the case of a captive who writes as a means of denying the disunifying effect of a captivity by reunifying the experience in print, thereby providing therapy for the narrator and perhaps even aesthetic justification for the story. Other survivors of Indian captivity claim they resorted to publication for a variety of more overt reasons. Such is the case, for example, with Massy Harbison, who opened her *Narrative of the Sufferings* by begging readers to “willingly patronize a poor widow, who is left to provide for her family through her own industry.”⁴⁴

Still other reasons captives gave for writing included satisfying the requests of friends and relatives (see Robert Eastburn, *Faithful Narrative* [1758]); performing public duty by setting straight the record (see Theresa Gowanlock, *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear* [1885] and Clara Blynn, *General Sheridan's Squaw Spy and Mrs. Clara Blynn's Captivity* [1869]); warning against naive missionary zeal (see Mary Barber, *The True Narrative of the Five Years' Suffering & Perilous Adventures* [1872]); earning ransom money for the rescue of other captives (see Nelson Lee, *Three Years among the Comanches* [1859]); and providing genuine educational value in the form of ethnological and historical data (see Grace E. Meredith, *Girl Captives of the Cheyennes* [1927]). Sometimes captives provide truly outrageous reasons for authorship. Among these are marketing an Indian blood tonic (see Edwin Eastman, *Seven and Nine Years among the Comanches and Apaches* [1873]) and promoting a touring “Wild West” gun show that included a franchise for shooting lessons (see William F. Carver, *Life of Dr. Wm. F. Carver of California: Champion Rifle-Shot of the World* [1875]).

Written during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the first captivity narratives were essentially the result of New World coloniza-

tion by European nations. Despite extensive contact with American Indians that long predated the first captivity narratives, Europeans remained basically ignorant about Indians. Moreover, what they purported to know was often based less on fact than on speculation. Narratives of exploration such as the anonymous *True Relation of the Gentleman of Elvas* (Evora, 1557), Richard Hakluyt's *Virginia Richly Valued* (London, 1609), Captain John Smith's *Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624), and Captain John Underhill's *News from America* (1638), among many other such works, often contained captivity narratives that offered European readers firsthand, though distorted, information about Indian culture.

In general, the narratives in these works projected stereotypes that conveniently supported the political aims of the European country that published them. Spanish narratives thus portrayed Indians as brutish beasts so that the native populations of the New World could, without serious objections from Europe, be more easily exploited, along with whatever wealth they possessed. French captivities, on the other hand, reflected a different design for Indians. Because the French agenda for the New World involved a network of outposts throughout the Canadian wilderness, the French wanted their colonists to remain on friendly terms with the Indians, who were therefore depicted as souls needing education and spiritual redemption. In Virginia, where the colonists initially sought a peaceful mercantile relationship with the Indians, British captivities viewed American Indians as innocent exotics, while in New England, where Pilgrims and Puritans saw Indians as a grave threat to the religious utopia they sought to establish, captivity narratives presented Indians in collusion with satanic forces bent on the annihilation of English colonial enterprises and all things godly.

As time passed, and New World settlement by European colonial powers became permanent, Indian captivity narratives entered an essentially religious phase of expression. For Puritans, Quakers, and Roman Catholics who sought to bring God's kingdom to the newly discovered lands across the Atlantic, Indian captivity assumed an increasingly pronounced theological dimension. 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 who must and would be subdued in the name of the Puritan Jehovah. Eventually they elaborated on this concept until Indians were seen as devils in human guise. An avid collector of captivity narratives, the Puritan divine Cotton Mather perhaps best summarized the Puritan view of Indians and their role within the cosmos: “These

Parts were then covered with nations of barbarous *Indians* and infidels, in which the *prince of the power of the air* did work as a spirit; nor could it be expected that nations of wretches, whose religion was the most explicit sort of *devil-worship*, should not be acted by the devil to engage in some early and bloody action, for the extinction of a plantation so contrary to his interest as that of *New England* was" (*Magnalia*, II, 479–80). For the Puritan, then, becoming a captive involved direct domination by diabolic spirits. Indian captivity was thus a religious experience with profound spiritual and social ramifications.

Accordingly, to the Puritan, Indian captivity was considered a religious trial sent by God for purposes known only to Him. "I cannot express to man the afflictions that lay upon my Spirit," wrote Mary Rowlandson, the most famous of all Puritan captives. In her words, "The portion of some is to have their Affliction by drops, now one drop and then another; but the dregs of the Cup, the Wine of astonishment, like a sweeping rain that leaveth no food, did the Lord prepare to be my portion" (*MR*, 36). Rowlandson's view was also felt by Quakers to the south and Roman Catholics to the north. Although both Quaker and Roman Catholic attitudes toward Indians were more tolerant than Puritan ones, captives nonetheless interpreted their captivities providentially. When in 1699 the Quaker merchant Jonathan Dickinson was captured by Indians off the coast of Florida, he viewed his experience as an "afflicting tryal" from God sent for the betterment of his soul. Similarly, a captive missionary priest like Father Francis Joseph Bressani, while hesitant to condemn Indians as diabolic agents, saw redemptive spiritual possibilities in his captivity experience: "What consoled me much was, to see that God granted me the grace of suffering some little pain in this world, instead of the incomparably far greater torments, which I should have had to suffer for my sins in the next world."⁴⁵

Like Father Bressani, the Puritans also considered Indian captivity a divine chastisement for wrongdoing. In the narrative of his captivity, John Williams records that "It would be unaccountable Stupidity in me, not to maintain the most Lively and Awful sense of Divine Rebukes, which the Holy GOD has seen meet in Spotless Sovereignty to dispense to me, my Family and People, in delivering us into the hands of those that Hated us."⁴⁶ Another Puritan captive, Hannah Swarton, felt certain that she merited her captivity as a punishment for her transgressions against God. In recounting her captivity, she remembered that she and her husband "had Left the Publick Worship and Ordinances of God . . . to Remove to the North part of *Casco-Bay*, where there was

no Church, or Minister of the Gospel . . . thereby Exposing our Children, to be bred Ignorantly like Indians."⁴⁷ For Swarton and for other Puritan captives, Indian captivity became "the symbolic equivalent of a journey into hell" (Levernier and Cohen, xviii). Mary Rowlandson, for instance, dramatizes this concept in her description of an Indian celebration shortly after the destruction of her home in Lancaster, Massachusetts: "Oh the roaring, and singing, and dancing, and yelling of those black creatures in the night, which made the place a lively resemblance of hell" (*MR*, 3). Puritans customarily described Indians as "copper-colored," and they called Satan "the Prince of Darkness."⁴⁸

During its religious phase, Indian captivity was often translated into spiritual allegory. Living through the experience and returning home was considered a sign of divine favor. This concept was frequently emphasized in the titles of the Puritan captivity narratives. It can be seen, for example, in the title of the first American edition of the Rowlandson narrative: *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God, together, with the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed* (1682), and in the title Williams chose for his narrative: *The Redeemed Captive, Returning to Zion* (1707). For both Rowlandson and Williams, escaping from the Indians to the freedom of Boston typologically suggested their future redemption in heaven (Levernier and Cohen, xviii). Accordingly, captivity narratives written during the religious phase often contain mention of any "special providences" which befell captives along the way. An unexpected cup of broth, an act of kindness or courtesy, crossing a river without getting overly wet, giving birth to a child—in short, anything unusual that benefited the captive—were seen as signs of divine intervention and worth notice. Among the many "Memorable Providences" that Mather notes about Puritan captives were the "Astonishing Deliverances" that were "sent from Heaven, to many of our Captives." In recording the experiences of these captives, Mather notes the "numberless" stories of divine interventions on their behalf:

Astonishing Deliverances have been sent from Heaven, to many of our Captives. They have been many a time upon the Point of Destruction; but, *These poor ones have Cryed unto the Lord*, and He has Remarkably delivered them.

'Tis a Wonderful Restraint from God upon the Brutish Salvages, that no *English Woman* was ever known to have any Violence offered unto her *Chastity*, by any of them.

'Tis wonderful, that no more of the Captives have been murdered by them, neither when they were Drunk, nor when the Caprichio's, and the Cruelties of their Diabolical Natures were to be Gratified.

'Tis Wonderful, that when many of the Captives have been just going to be Sacrificed, some strange Interposition of the Divine Providence has put a stop to the Execution, and prevented their being made a Sacrifice. The Stories are numberless.⁴⁹

This view of Indian captivity as an allegorical interpretation of God's working on behalf of the captive also is reflected in the titles of Quaker narratives—Elizabeth Hanson's *God's Mercy Surmounting Man's Cruelty, Exemplified in the Captivity and Redemption of Elizabeth Hanson* (1728) and Jonathan Dickinson's *God's Protecting Providence Man's Surest Help and Defence in Times of the Greatest and Most Imminent Danger* (1699). And it surfaces as well in the narratives of Roman Catholic captives who, like Father Bressani and his colleagues, believed that God used their captivities as a means for improving their souls and as an instrument for converting the Indians through prayer and exemplary Christian behavior.

Often the religious messages inherent in the captivity experience were seen as having meaning not just for the captive but for the community at large. As a result, Puritans, Catholics, and Quakers alike took interest in passing these lessons on to others. In *Reports of Divine Kindness* (1707), for example, Williams explains that "The Infinitely Wise disposer of all things, who aims at His own Glory, doth sometimes bring Persons into the depths of distress, and then magnify his Power & Grace in raising them up out of their afflictions: and in many respects by such things, He has a design of advancing His own Honour & Glory in the World."⁵⁰ It is, continues Williams, therefore "very acceptable to God for Christians to entertain the report of the experiences of others, to excite their own hearts to glorify God. For if God make it a duty in the receiver to report, it layes the hearer under an obligation, to set such remarks upon the passages of Divine Providence in others, as may be useful to engage their hearts to Glorify God, for the favours and blessings He has bestowed upon others" (*Reports*, 8–9). In a "Pastoral Letter" published by Mather in *Good Fetch'd Out of Evil* (1706) and subtitled *A Collection of Memorables Relating to Our Captives*, Williams specifically instructs his fellow captives "that it well becomes them who have had Eminent Mercies, to be shewing to others *what great things God has done for them*," for in so doing they will "stir up others to Glorify God" and "may be instrumental in putting others upon trusting God, and making Him their Refuge in an Evil Day."⁵¹ Recognizing this obligation to the community, Swatton makes explicit the reason why she gave Mather an account of her captivity: "I knew not, but

one Reason of Gods bringing all these Afflictions and Miseries upon me, and then Enabling me to bear them, was, *That the Works of God Might be made manifest*" (*Humiliations*, 70). Indeed, the lessons to be drawn from the captivity experience shaped the very form in which many early captivities were told. The narratives of such captives as Rowlandson, Williams, Swatton, and Dickinson, for instance, assume the form of spiritual autobiography. By writing the events of their captivities in the way that Providence had allowed them to occur, captives could scrutinize their experiences for any spiritual patterns that might emerge and then pass those lessons to the entire community.

Well aware of the instructional value of the captivity narratives, clerical authorities of all denominations encouraged their publication, sometimes even assisting in the writing process itself. For nearly 50 years, the Jesuits published yearly installments of *The Jesuit Relations* (1632–73) in the hopes that the lessons gained from the captivities and hardships of their missionaries among the Indian peoples of North America would not be lost to the faithful worldwide. Likewise, the Quakers of Pennsylvania financed the publication of the Dickinson captivity, *God's Protecting Providence*. Like the Jesuit editors who compiled and printed *The Jesuit Relations*, the anonymous Quaker editor of the Dickinson narrative felt a public obligation to reveal to others the many "Signal favors" of this captivity experience. Concerning people like Dickinson who had undergone "remarkable outward deliverances from God," the editor voices a communal imperative for them to instruct others about the spiritual import of their experiences:

Remarkable outward deliverances, ought in a more than commonly remarkable manner, to be the objects of their gratitude, to their great *Deliverer*. I must confess, thanks giving (which is what we poor *Mortals* can return, for the manifold favours we daily receive from him) that it's rise in the heart; and as *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, how can those who are truly thankful in heart; but *render the calves of their lips*; in telling to their Friends and acquaintance, *how great things GOD hath done for them*: Nay, they are so affected, with such eminent appearance of the Protecting hand of Providence, for their help, preservation and deliverance; that they are not willing to confine in them only, but to publish it to the World; that the Fame of their God may be spread *from Sea to Sea*, and from one end of the Earth to the other.⁵²

Not to be outdone by their Catholic and Quaker counterparts, Puritan religious leaders not only assisted in the publication of captivity narra-

tives, they also used them in their homilies and historical writings. As Vaughan and Clark explain, "of the best New England narratives before 1750, only a few can be considered purely lay products. Several were written by clerics or their immediate kin; others were transcribed and embellished by clergymen."⁵³ Increase Mather is thought to have been involved in the publication of Mary Rowlandson's narrative and to have written the preface of the first edition.⁵⁴ Among the many accounts of "memorable events" that he included in his *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684) was the account of Quentin Stockwell's captivity among the Wachusett Indians during King Philip's War.

Ever aware of his filial responsibilities, Increase Mather's son Cotton continued to promulgate the public interest in Indian captivity narratives begun by his father. In *Good Fetch'd Out of Evil*, the younger Mather includes accounts of the captivities of John Williams and another Puritan captive named Mary Ftench, and in *A Memorial of the Present Deplorable State of New-England* (1707), he prints an account of the captivity of Hannah Btadley, a Puritan woman unfortunate enough to have been captured by Indians in 1697 and again in 1703. In addition, variants of the Swarton and Dustan captivities, transcribed and edited by Mather himself, appear in *Humiliations Follow'd with Deliverances*, a fast-day sermon delivered by Mather in Boston on 6 March 1697, and later published. As part of the sermon, these captivities were designed to alert Puritans throughout New England to the possibility and even likelihood of God using His power to punish them, through acts of Indian hostility, for their spiritual transgressions and apostasies. Just two years later, Mather again used his account of the Dustan captivity, this time in *Decennium Luctuosum* (1699), as an illustration of "A Notable Exploit" performed for God during wartime by "poor Women," who "had nothing but fervent Prayers"⁵⁵ to assist them. Along with several other narratives, both the Swarton and Dustan materials were resurrected still one more time for publication in Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) as instances of "memorable providences" and "wonderful deliverances." So powerful a precedent was the early tendency to view Indian captivity within a religious context that even as late as the mid-nineteenth century, when cultural pressures toward an exclusively theological exegesis of the captivity experience had subsided, the clergy still continued to take an active interest in collecting, preserving, popularizing, and publishing captivity accounts, and some captives still attributed religious concerns as a primary motivation behind the writing of their narratives.

By the mid-eighteenth century, captivity narratives entered another phase of development. A general decline in religious authority and a corresponding increase in secular concerns, especially on the frontier, markedly changed the character of the captivity narratives. Once primarily an occasion for religious expression, captivity narratives became instead a means for spreading propaganda against those nations and powers that blocked Anglo-American westerly settlement. Accordingly, this propaganda was directed against the French, the English, and the American Indian, all of whom at different times and in different degrees were seen as enemies. Even the very form of the captivity narrative was altered to suit the changing cultural purposes to which it was put.

Frequently reprinted, these narratives sometimes appeared as broadsides or as filler material in almanacs sold by travelling booksellers like Mason Locke Weems (1759–1825). As Moses Coit Tyler states in his *History of American Literature* (1878), until after the Civil War, when newspapers replaced them, almanacs were "the supreme and only literary necessity" in nearly every American household.⁵⁶ Sold and read throughout the United States, almanacs provided an excellent medium for advertising the potential of the frontier territories for private and commercial development and the need to remove and protect those lands from the Indians. Serving this purpose, "A True and Faithful Narrative of the Captivity and Travels of Capt. Isaac Stewart" was published in *Bickerstaff's Genuine Boston Almanack for 1787*, where it was used to bolster American claims to lands southwest of the Mississippi River by encouraging Americans to settle there. With the signing of the Peace of 1783, all lands from Florida to the Mississippi had been ceded by the United States to Spain, which in turn attempted to keep Americans from the region by allying itself with the Indians. In order to ensure an American presence in the area, settlement of the region by American citizens was urgent. Obviously fictitious (the narrative alludes to Welsh-speaking Indians and another tribe "whose arrows were pointed with gold"), the Stewart narrative simultaneously describes the "horrid barbarity" of the Indians, who it implies are an impediment to progress and must therefore be removed, and the wealth of the land, with "gold dust in the brooks and rivulers," there for the taking. According to Stewart, "I was not acquainted with the nature of the ore, but I lifted up what he [a guide] called gold-dust from the bottom of the little rivulets issuing from the cavities of the rocks: It had a yellowish cast and was remarkably heavy."⁵⁷ Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, almanacs such as *Bickerstaff's* played a major role in disseminating propagan-

distic narratives like the Stewart one. Indeed, the first of the Bickerstaff almanacs (that for 1768) includes a selection with the title, "Adventures of a Young British Officer among the Abenakee Savages."

Like almanacs, broadsides offered a convenient medium for the publication of captivity narratives whose primary purpose was propagandistic and immediate. Easily produced and marketed, broadsides were printed on one side of a sheet of paper and then distributed by travelling vendors who brought them to distant places where they were purchased by individuals and publicly displayed. Distributed during the Second Seminole War (1835–41), the broadside "Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mason," for example, was designed to enlist support for the war by publicizing propaganda about alleged Indian war crimes. According to the Treaty of Payne's Landing (1832), Seminoles of Florida had agreed to move west of the Mississippi River. As compensation for their ancestral lands, the Seminoles would receive \$15,400 in cash, and each member of the tribe would get a new shirt and a blanket for the journey (Levernier and Cohen, 85). Incensed at the treachery of white officials who had tricked their leaders into signing this agreement, large numbers of the Seminoles resisted deportation. The result was a protracted war that cost thousands of casualties and millions of dollars and that deeply humiliated government leaders in Washington who were beset by protests from an outraged constituency that largely sided with the Seminoles. Framed by two woodcuts—one depicting an Indian with upraised tomahawk in the act of murdering Mrs. Mason and her child and the other "a battle with the Indians"—the central feature of the broadside is a short recital of the "sufferings of Mrs. Mason, with an account of the Massacre of her youngest Child."

Preceding the narrative is a short prefatory remark that clearly reveals the blatantly inflammatory intent of the author:

At the Great Council of the principal Chiefs and Warriors of the different Indian tribes bordering on the Southern frontiers and Florida, assembled in the spring of 1836, the solemn vows then entered into have been kept. The Indians then agreed that so long as the Sun should continue to rise or the grass to grow, they would never leave the land of their fathers. And so inveterate and deadly was their hatred towards the white people that many of them pledged themselves neither to eat or sleep until they had taken the scalp of a pale face.

Under these feelings commenced the *Florida Indian War*. The distress and cruelty which has been inflicted and the hardships endured are beyond description, and although an incessant war has been waged to an enormous expense and

the lives of many a brave soldier, the Indians still remain unsubdued, and almost every mail brings the news of some horrid massacre. The following account given by Mrs. Mason of her captivity and suffering, are from her own pen.⁵⁸

Both Mrs. Mason and the events described in her narrative are probably fictitious, but broadsides like this one helped justify the Indian wars and unify public opinion. Other broadsides about Indian captivity include the "Narrative of the Tragical Death of Mrs. Darius Barber" (c. 1816) and "War! War!! War!!! Women and Children Butchered" (c. 1832). The similarity between these broadsides illustrates much about their purpose and medium. The central illustration on the Mason broadside, an Indian threatening to tomahawk a woman and a child, appears on all three broadsides. So common were such publications that printers apparently shared a manufactured engraving that they used to embellish them (Levernier and Cohen, 86).

In the vast majority of instances, however, captivity narratives intended as propaganda were published as inexpensive pamphlets, ranging from 20 to 100 pages and printed on cheap paper. In that class of literature sometimes referred to as pulp thrillers, shilling shockers, and penny dreadfuls, they "constitute the stereotypical Indian captivity narrative" (Levernier and Cohen, xxii) as it has been historically envisioned by the white popular culture. Typical of this type of narrative are *The Horrid Cruelty of the Indians Exemplified in the Life of Charles Saunders, Late of Charles-town, in South Carolina* (1763) and the *Narrative of the Massacre, by the Savages of the Wife and Children of Thomas Baldwin* (1836). Sixteen pages in length and surviving only by chance, the Saunders narrative reflects the propagandistic concerns of the times of its publication shortly after the conclusion of the French and Indian Wars. It begins by mentioning "several instances of the Indians being prejudiced against the English" because they had been "stirr'd up by the perfidious French," but most of the narrative focuses on the more immediate problem reflected in the title, namely "the Horrid Cruelty of the Indians," who, in the tradition of the earlier Puritan captivities, are condemned throughout the narrative as "inhuman monsters," "diabolical Fiends," "infernal ministers of Vengeance," and "brutal barbarous Villains."⁵⁹

Published more than 50 years later, the Baldwin narrative is similarly brief, and its main focus, as its title states, is the presentation of anti-Indian propaganda, which it amply accomplishes by recounting the story, probably fictitious but presented as absolute fact, of an old man,

then supposedly living as a hermit on the frontier, whose entire family was purportedly massacred by Indians. Retreating into the religiosity of the earlier captivity narratives, the surviving Baldwin has spent his life in prayer. But unlike that in earlier Puritan captivities, the piety in this narrative is merely sentimental, reflecting instead "the softer religiosity into which Puritan severity had declined" by the mid-nineteenth century (Levernier and Cohen, 179). More indicative of its intent is an elaborate engraving that illustrates the "Massacre of the Baldwin Family by the Savages" and is accompanied by the following caption:

The scenes which the above Plate is designed to represent (as described by Baldwin) are—Fig. 1 his House in Flames—2 a Savage in the act of Tomahawking Mrs. B. (his wife)—3 his youngest child (a daughter) eleven years of age on her knees intreating a Savage to spare her life—4 two Savages, one in the act of tomahawking and the other in that of scalping his oldest son—5 Baldwin (the elder) intercepted and taken captive in his attempt to escape by flight—6 the Savages burning his second son at a stake, around which they are dancing to and fro in savage triumph—7 the Savages returning (with the unfortunate Baldwin and his Only surviving child, captives) to the settlement.

The degeneration of the captivity narratives into pulp fiction presented, for purposes of propaganda and sensation, as fact is revealed by the popularity of this type of narrative during the nineteenth century. A garbled reworking of the Baldwin narrative, titled *A Narrative of the Horrid Massacre by the Indians, of the Wife and Children of the Christian Hermit* (1840), contains added examples of Indian cruelties against white settlers and argues "the folly of attempting to civilize the savage." Yet another version of this captivity, *A Narrative of the Extraordinary Life of John Conrad Shafford, the Dutch Hermit* (1840), takes place in Canada rather than in the United States and draws special attention to "the most shameful treatment" of Shafford's daughter at the hands of "a lusty and most powerful looking savage" who forces her to "become his adopted squaw!"⁶⁰

The evolution of the captivity narrative from primarily a document of religious statement to one of propaganda and outright bigotry began in 1692 with the intercontinental wars between the English and the French which concluded in the French and Indian War (1754–63), known in Europe as the Seven Years' War. Often appearing to be religious in nature, many of the captivity narratives from this period actually had very little to do with spiritual instruction. Instead, they were designed to

evoke anti-French sentiment by claiming that the French hired Native American mercenaries to massacre British colonists from Maine to Pennsylvania. Purportedly written "to glorify God, for his Goodness and Faithfulness to the Meanest of his Servants, and to encourage others to trust in him," *A Faithful Narrative of the Many Dangers and Sufferings as Well as Wonderful Deliverances of Robert Eastburn* (1758), for example, contains numerous instances of French-inspired Indian atrocities (RE, 42). "Even in Time of Peace," states Eastburn, the French governor of Canada "gives the Indians great Encouragement to Murder and Captivate the poor Inhabitants of our Frontiers" (RE, 38). According to Eastburn, the French are so "barbarous" that "contrary to the Laws of War, among all civilized Nations," they trained the young men their Indian allies captured from the English as recruits for the French military who are then "employed in Murdering their Countrymen; yea, perhaps their Fathers and Brethren" (RE, 33–34).

Similar accusations likewise appear in *A Narrative of the Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of William and Elizabeth Fleming* (1756) and *French and Indian Cruelty Exemplified in the Life and Various Vicissitudes of Fortune of Peter Williamson* (1759). According to the Flemings, the French gave the Indians "a certain Sum per Scalp and for Prisoners, if they were young, and fit for Business," but "the Old People and Children" were to be "kill'd and scalped, as well as such as were refractory and not willing to go with them."⁶¹ In this way, they charge, the French encouraged the Indians to kill the helpless and infirm rather than to take them captive. A preface to the Williamson narrative clearly pronounces its author's anti-French biases.⁶² It states that "Herein is exhibited, in a concise manner, a scene of many barbarities, and unheard of cruelties, exercised by the savage Indians instigated by the treacherous French, in America, upon many innocent families, sparing neither the aged, nor the most tender of infants." In the opinion of Williamson, the Indians, whose "numberless and unheard of Barbarities" (Williamson, 21) he details at great length, were "well supplied by the French with Arms and Ammunitions, and greatly encouraged by them in their continual Excursions and Barbarities, not only in having extraordinary Premiums for such Scalps as they should take and carry home with them at their Return, but great Presents of all Kinds, beside, Rum, Powder, Ball, &c. before they sallied forth" (Williamson, 37). Had the French not "tempted" the Indians "with the alluring Bait of all-powerful Gold," states Williamson, "myself as well as hundreds of others might still have lived most happily in our Stations" (Williamson, 16).

In keeping with the earlier religious mission of the captivity tradition, anti-French captivity narratives often contain anti-Catholic propaganda as well. "O! may not the *Zeal of Papists*, in propagating *Superstition* and *Idolatry*," laments Eastburn about the efforts of the French clergy to convert New England captives to Roman Catholicism, "make *Protestants* ashamed of their *Lukewarmness*, in promoting the Religion of the *Bible!*" (RE, 21). When Elizabeth Fleming's Indian captors told her about the many "old People and Children they kill'd and scalped," she "asked them if they did not think it was a Sin to shed so much innocent Blood." The Indians promptly replied "That the French were much better off than the English, for they had a great many old Men among them that could forgive all their Sins, and these Men had often assured the Indians it was no Sin to destroy Hereticks, and all the English were such" (Fleming, 16).

In his *Travels and Surprising Adventures* (1761), another captive, John Thompson, also blames the Roman Catholic church for inciting Indians against the British, pointing to a collusion between the Catholic clergy and French government officials to destroy all British outposts in the Americas:

The reason for which they [the Indians] killed our British people then, was first, because the French King hired them; he having Governors in his Plantations in America, who gave the savage Indians 15 l. sterling for every one of our British people they killed; thinking thereby to destroy all our British settlements. The second reason for their killing the British people, was because the French Priests told the savages, that when the Son of GOD came into the world, the British people killed the Son of GOD, or the good man as they call him . . . for which cause, they intend to destroy all the English or British people.⁶³

Similarly, *A Journal of the Captivity of Jean Lowry* (1760) concludes with a spirited discussion between her Catholic inquisitors and Lowry, who claims that Jesuit priests "attacked" her "about Religion" and the infallibility of Rome. When Lowry attempts to argue with a Jesuit, he accuses her of being "in a damnable Condition."⁶⁴

Predictably, at the time of the American Revolution, captivity writers turn their attention away from the French and toward the British, who are accused of doing the same acts of barbarism formerly associated with France. The first paragraph of *A Narrative of the Capture of Certain Americans at Westmorland by the Savages* (c. 1780), for example, points responsibility toward the British for having used their Indian allies to perpetrate the horrors that it records: "The savages who occasioned the

following scenes, were sent from the British garrison at Niagara, some time in the fore part of March A.D. 1780, through a deep snow, on a wretched skulking Indian expedition, against a few scattered people which they hoped to find about Susquehannah; especially those who were making sugar in the woods at that time of the year."⁶⁵ The various "scenes" that the narrative occasions include the torture, killing, and mutilation of several captives by Indians who receive encouragement from the British for whatever harm they can inflict on American settlers and soldiers. By offering the Indians a reward for scalps but not for prisoners, the British are said to encourage the Indians to keep their captives alive "for the purpose of carrying the baggage" until they reach the British garrison at Niagara, where the captives were then tomahawked "and their scalps, not themselves," redeemed (*Westmorland*, 7).

Like the Westmorland narrative, *A Narrative of the Capture and Treatment of John Dodge* (1779) is vituperatively Anglophobic in the sentiments it expresses. According to Dodge, who had worked in Sandusky, Ohio, as an Indian trader before he was taken captive by Indians and turned over to the British at Detroit, the Indians were "no ways interested in . . . the unhappy dispute between Great-Britain and America" before the British had "roused [them] to war" by offering them a twenty-dollar reward for every American scalp and telling them that the Americans intended "to murder them and take their lands."⁶⁶ Throughout the narrative, Dodge singles out for special criticism the inhumane behavior of the British leaders whom he encounters. Angry at their lack of humanity, Dodge calls these men "barbarians" (*JD*, 13) and is particularly angry with Governor Henry Hamilton, who he claims ordered Indian war parties "not to spare man, woman, or child" because "the children would make soldiers, and the women would keep up the flock" (*JD*, 13). Even "some of the Savages," states Dodge, "made an objection, respecting the butchering of women and children," but he continues, because "those sons of Britain offered no reward for Prisoners" and a generous bounty for scalps (an accusation frequently leveled by captivity writers against both the French and the Indians), the Indians would murder and scalp their captives in the sight of the British, who "shewed them every mark of joy and approbation" by running "to meet and hug them to their breasts reeking with the blood of innocence" (*JD*, 13-14). Frequently reprinted and widely distributed, captivity narratives such as that by Dodge greatly helped further American independence by uniting public opinion against the British, even in Great Britain itself, where Dodge's narrative was published in a popular

periodical, *The Remembrancer*. After the war, Dodge's narrative drew the notice of George Washington and the United States Congress, who interviewed Dodge about his experiences and used them as evidence against the British for "their former inhuman treatment of prisoners, who fell into their hands."⁶⁷

Significantly, while the impulse toward anti-British sensationalism subsided with the conclusion of the American Revolution, narratives like Dodge's reappear during rimes of political rivalry between Great Britain and its former colonies.⁶⁸ During the 1790s, for example, when Great Britain angered the United States by insisting on the retention of its military outposts in the Northwest and arguing for the existence of a separate Indian nation under British protection, anti-British propaganda reasserts itself as a dominant impulse in the captivity narratives that were written and reprinted at the time, and it again surfaces with the approach of the War of 1812. A *True Narrative of the Sufferings of Mary Kinnan* (1795) is a case in point. One of the more popular captivity narratives, it recounts the captivity of a Virginia settler who, as the subtitle of her narrative indicates, "was Taken Prisoner by the Shawnee Nation of Indians on the Thirteenth Day of May, 1791, and Remained with them till the Sixteenth of August, 1794," and offers the following statement, Shakespearean quotation included, about the "perfidy" of "British agents" to the west who encourage the Indians "to persevere in their warfare" against "the people of the United States":

O Britain! how heavy will be the weight of thy crimes at the last great day! Instigated by thee, the Indian murderer plunges his knife into the bosom of innocence, of piety, and of virtue, and drags thousands into a captivity, worse than death. The cries of widows, and the groans of orphans daily ascend, like a thick cloud, before the judgment-seat of heaven, and

"Plead like angels, trumpet-tongued,
 "For your damnation:
 "And pity, like a naked, new-born babe,
 "Striding the blast, or heav'n's cherubin, hors'd
 "Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
 "Shall blow your horrid deeds in every eye,
 "That tears shall drown the wind."⁶⁹

Writing at the time of the War of 1812, Elias Darnall is similarly incensed at the British, whom he accuses of "employing the savages to

murder the defenceless inhabitants of the frontiers."⁷⁰ Among other things, he claims that the British "paid the Indians for infants' scalps that were taken out of their mothers' wombs" and that "when the Indians sent home to them scalps, from the unborn infant, to the grey hairs, in bales, like goods; they [the British] had days of feasting, rejoicing and thanks giving to the Lord for the victory they had gained" (*Kentucky*, 53). Although the British may "call themselves Christians," continues Darnall, "the D***l would be ashamed to acknowledge such a people as any part of his offspring" (*Kentucky*, 53).

With the conclusion of the American Revolution and the withdrawal of British military forces from North America, anti-Indian propaganda becomes a major motivation for writing and publishing captivities. As Washburn indicates, "It was easier to express outrage at the cruelty of the Indian in capturing white women and children than to defend the policy of separating the Indian from his land" (Washburn, "Introduction," 1983, xi). While an occasional narrative drew favorable attention to Native American culture, most were shaped by publishers exploiting a mass market that thrived on sensationalism, in a natural alliance with land speculators who wanted to implement a policy of Indian extermination in the interest of real estate development. Accounts like *The Remarkable Adventures of Jackson Johonnet* (1793), the *Narrative of the Tragical Death of Mr. Darius Barber . . . Inhumanely Butchered by the Indians* (1818), *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Massy Harbison from Indian Barbarity . . . with an Infant at Her Breast* (1825), the *Narrative of the Captivity and Providential Escape of Mrs. Jane Lewis* (1833), and *In Captivity: The Experience, Privations and Dangers of Sam'l J. Brown, and Others While Prisoners of the Hostile Sioux* (1862), among dozens of others, were in large measure designed to horrify audiences into hating what the novelist Hugh Henry Brackenridge (1748–1816), himself an editor of captivity narratives, referred to as "the animals, vulgarly called Indians."⁷¹ In these narratives, American Indians are depicted as so "fierce and cruel" that "an extirpation of them would be useful to the world, and honorable to those who can effect it" (*Expedition*, 31).

The locale for these narratives accompanies the westerly movement of the frontier. Initially, they are set primarily in the western parts of Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, and Virginia. As these areas were settled by whites and the Indians either contained on reservations or pushed further westward, the setting for captivity narratives shifts to the Midwest, specifically Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, and the territories surrounding the Ohio, Mississippi, and

Missouri Rivers, which provided the major avenues of access for white pioneers in search of inexpensive lands. During the late nineteenth century, the primary setting for captivity narratives becomes Texas, Arizona, Colorado, Oregon, Utah, and the Dakotas, where the last of the wars between Indians and whites took place. As late as 1874, the impulse toward propaganda was still markedly evident in the narratives being written and circulated. Published in Lawrence, Massachusetts, the 7 February issue of the *Essex Eagle* contains a captivity story titled "One more Chapter of Indian Barbarities: Fiendish Treatment of a Lawrence Man by the Rocky Mountain Snake Indians." Eventually, the setting for the captivity narrative extends westward across the Pacific Ocean to the islands of Polynesia, where, in a work such as the *Narrative of the Capture, Sufferings, and Miraculous Escape of Mrs. Eliza Fraser* (1837), New Guinea islanders are referred to as "Indians" and "squaws." They live in "wigwams," brandish "tomahawks," travel in "canoes," and have children called "papooses" and leaders referred to as "chiefs."⁷²

Each of the various wars that took place between whites and Indians also produced its share of propaganda narratives. *A Journal of the Adventures of Matthew Bunn* (1796) tells about its author's captivity in 1791 by Kickapoos, who were then under assault by a military unit sent to bring the Indians of the Old Northwest into the jurisdiction of the newly confederated United States. *An Affecting Account of the Tragical Death of Major Swan and the Captivity of Mrs. Swan and Infant Child by the Savages* (1815) occurs near St. Louis during the border disputes that followed the War of 1812. *A Narrative of the Life and Sufferings of Mrs. Jane Johns, Who Was Barbarously Wounded and Scalped by Seminole Indians in East Florida* (1837) involves a Florida captivity and, like the broadside "Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mason," was published during the Second Seminole War. *The Narrative of the Capture and Providential Escape of Misses Frances and Almira Hall* (1832) concerns a captivity purported to have taken place in the Midwest at the time of Black Hawk's War. *Royal B. Stratton's Captivity of the Oatman Girls* (1857), *General Sheridan's Squaw Spy, and Mrs. Clara Blynn's Captivity among the Wild Indians of the Prairies* (1869), Fanny Kelly's *Narrative of My Captivity among the Sioux Indians* (1871), and Josephine Meeker's *The Ute Massacre* (1879) are set in the West during the late nineteenth century.

In an obvious attempt to engender as much anti-Indian hostility as possible, these narratives contain highly evocative descriptions of Indian brutalities. Accounts of murder and torture, usually described in lurid detail, predominate and are often accompanied by graphic woodcuts and

illustrations. Babies are thrown into cauldrons of boiling water, fried in skillets, eaten by dogs, or dashed against trees or rocks (see Fig. 2). The aged are dispatched with tomahawks and scalped. Women are sexually violated, and captives of all ages and both sexes are burnt at the stake, dismembered, and sometimes even devoured in orgiastic rituals said to be of almost, but not quite, "too shocking a nature to be presented to the public."⁷³ In these narratives the line between fact and fiction becomes blurred. Plagiarisms abound, and the most egregious fictions are frequently presented as absolute fact and are sometimes even accompanied by bogus testimonials and affidavits.

Such is the case, for instance, in *A Narrative of the Life and Sufferings of Mrs. Jane Johns* (1837). According to its anonymous author, who begins by placing the narrative within the context of others of its kind, "Many have been the victims who have fallen beneath the tomahawk, or before the Indian arrow or rifle; of these some have been scalped after, and some undoubtedly before, life became extinct; but few have survived the combined effects of the rifle, the scalping knife and fire, as occurred in the case of this young lady, whose sufferings we are now about to detail."⁷⁴ After being scalped, set aflame, and left for dead, Mrs. Johns recovers, and, states the author, "Finding all quiet, her first thought was to extinguish the fire of her clothes, to accomplish which, she scraped the blood from her denuded head in her hands, and cautiously (for she still feared some Indians were near,) applied it to the fire, which was actually consuming her" (*Johns*, 12).

To authenticate the tale, the author includes testimonials from two military officials, a judge, an aunt ("much respected in Florida"), and Mrs. Johns's personal physician, who provides the following account of what he witnessed when Mrs. Johns was first brought to him for medical treatment:

"Here I beheld a sight, at the bare recollection of which my very heart sickens. I until then thought I had viewed, in the course of my professional career, wounds of the most revolting character. I have witnessed many horrors in the practice of surgery, I might almost venture to acknowledge without wincing—but when I looked upon this young widow, prostrate, in calm resignation, with one arm deeply lacerated, so much so that the muscles absolutely gaped open nearly to the bones. The same rifle ball which had effected this wound passed through the neck; these, in themselves, were painful to behold in one so peculiarly wretched, but who can depict in colors sufficiently powerful to convey to the imagination the appalling spectacle of her head, divested of the scalp to

the bare bone, in two places, of which it was not only denuded and scaped, but pottions absolutely cut out by the knife of the demon who had inflicted such unheard of torture!!! I measured the exteut of skull divested of its natural integuments, which was from the upper part of the forehead (leaving at its commencement only a few hairs) to the occiput, nine inches—on the right side of the head it appeared to me that the knife had slipped, a cut had been made obliquely, otherwise the circumcision of the scalp was tolerably regular. Her legs were considerably burned, but not to the extent I apprehended, from the appearance of her dress when shewn to me." (*Johns*, 8–9)

Despite extensive efforts to verify the personages and events described in this narrative, there is no reason to think that Mrs. Johns ever experienced these torments or, for that matter, that she even existed.

Perhaps the most notorious example, however, of the mass proliferation of anti-Indian propaganda was the publication and frequent reprinting during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of anthologies of captivity narratives whose avowed purpose was the total extermination of the American Indian. To facilitate this ignoble end, the editors of these volumes strung together highly evocative tales "of the dreadful cruelties exercised by the Indians on persons so unfortunate as to fall into their hands," as the anonymous editor of *The Affecting History of the Dreadful Distresses of Frederick Manheim's Family* (1793), the earliest and most famous of these collections, explains.⁷⁵ The titles of the anti-Indian anthologies openly display their militaristic and racist intents: *Horrid Indian Cruelties* (1799); *A Selection of Some of the Most Interesting Narratives of Outrages Committed by the Indians in Their Wars with the White People* (1808–11); *Indian Anecdotes and Barbarities: Being a Description of Their Customs and Deeds of Cruelty, with an Account of the Captivity, Sufferings and Heroic Conduct of the Many Who Have Fallen into Their Hands, or Who Have Defended Themselves from Savage Vengeance; All Illustrating the General Traits of Indian Character* (1837); and *Indian Atrocities! Affecting and Thrilling Anecdotes Respecting the Hardships and Sufferings of Our Brave and Venerable Forefathers, in Their Bloody and Heartrending Skirmishes and Contests with the Ferocious Savages* (1846).

Ironically, although anti-Indian captivity narratives continued to be produced about Western captivities until the twentieth century, a different impulse began to dominate the publication of narratives in the East. By the 1830s, when the Indian wars of the West were just beginning, in the East the Indian was already becoming a historic relic. Perhaps the most striking example of the contrast at this time between



This lurid engraving from *Miss Coleson's Narrative of Her Captivity* (1864) typifies the visual sensationalism that often accompanied anti-Indian propagandist narratives during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Courtesy of the Edward E. Ayer Collection, the Newberry Library.

how the East and the West responded to the American Indian was the treatment that the Sauk leader Black Hawk received after his defeat in 1832. In Washington, D.C., and throughout the East, he was received as a hero. In response to public pressure, President Andrew Jackson, normally not an admirer of Indians, entertained him at the White House, and former President John Quincy Adams awarded him a medallion for his valor. On his return to the Midwest, however, a military escort was needed to protect Black Hawk from angry crowds who called for his execution. Still absent in the Midwest, there had, by the 1830s, emerged in the East a sentimental and antiquarian interest in the past and an appreciation for primitive culture inherited from the Enlightenment *philosophes* and reinforced by their Romantic successors, Rousseau, Chateaubriand, and Keats.

This changing attitude toward Indians is, in turn, reflected in the captivity narratives written and published in the East. In contrast to the propaganda narratives, the Indian ceased to be an object of white hatred and was transformed instead into a symbol of America's national heritage, whose legacy was to be preserved not just in literature but also in sculpture and on porcelain, canvas, postcards, and advertisements. At the very least, the American Indian was seen as a pathetic anachronism carelessly discarded as white society, with its increasingly more obvious apparent flaws and problems, moved relentlessly forward into the future. Affected by this shift in attitudes, historians, tellers of folktales, ballad singers, playwrights, and novelists turned toward the Indian and Indian captivity as a theme for their nationalistic and imaginative literary endeavors, and as a result the captivity narrative assumes a character far different from any that it previously exhibited.

During the nineteenth century, for example, numerous captivity narratives were published in local and regional histories of several Eastern towns and states, where they reminded white Americans of their past, which could in turn be used to inspire patriotism and national pride.⁷⁶ Captivity accounts also appear in American Indian and military histories. In these contexts, they became a means, respectively, for preserving historical and ethnological information about the Indian and for illustrating frontier heroism. In addition, captivity materials appear in large-scale historical works such as George Bancroft's *History of the United States* (1834–82), Washington Irving's *Astoria* (1836), Henry David Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849), and Francis Parkman's *The Jesuits in North America* (1867), where they were

used to explore—not always positively—nationalistic assumptions about progress, race, and Manifest Destiny.

As part of a growing body of information that Eastern writers of the nineteenth century were assimilating into a collective definition of America's past, captivity narratives were written as children's literature, and they were incorporated into a rapidly growing body of folklore that similarly attempted to provide Americans with a national heritage and cultural identity.⁷⁷ Stories of Indian captivity appear, for example, in McGuffey's Readers, where they were read by countless thousands of young people, who found in them lessons in history, ethics, and adventure. Ballad singers in turn romanticized their nation's frontier heritage by composing folksongs about Indian captivity, and tellers of folktales utilized the subject as well. On the basis of their exploits as Indian captives, folk celebrities even developed around the subject. Included in this last category are Davy Crockett and Jim Bridger, as well as Daniel Boone, Tim Murphy, and Tom Quick.

Finally, Indian captivity enters the mainstream of nineteenth-century American belletristic literature in the form of poems, plays, short stories, and novels. Like their counterparts in history, children's literature, and folklore, nineteenth-century American poets, dramatists, and novelists turned to Indian captivity as a theme for their works. Striving to develop a uniquely American literary tradition that would reflect, in a noticeable way, what Philip Freneau and others called "the rising glory of America,"⁷⁸ they attempted to write in established forms about distinctively New World themes. Dramatic, exotic, and in every respect thoroughly American, the Indian captivity narrative served this function well. It was decidedly American, and its theme and setting could readily be transferred to Old World forms of writing.

Dramatists, for example, were quick to realize the adaptability of Indian captivity to the stage. Searching for decidedly nationalistic themes for their dramatic productions, they found history, romance, and high adventure in stories of Indian captivity. For novelty and dramatic splendor, nothing in Europe could match Indian chiefs and maidens who, when arrayed in brightly colored feathers and wilderness costumes, provided a distinctively New World alternative to the more urban dramas then in vogue. While only a few of these plays survive, playbills and mention of them in other sources attest to the popularity of such productions. James Nelson Barker's *The Indian Princess; or, La Belle Sauvage* (1808), about the rescue of Captain John Smith by the Indian princess Pocahontas, was so popular that it became the first in a series on

the subject that later included a satiric rendition by John Brougham titled *Po-ca-hon-tas, or the Gentle Savage, an Original Aboriginal Erratic Operatic Semi-Civilized and Demi-Savage Extravaganza, Being a Per-Version of Ye Trewe and Wonderrefulle Hystorie of Ye Renowned Princess* (1855).

Eventually, through the novel, the captivity narrative became legitimized as the subject for serious literary endeavors. Captivity materials could easily be molded to conform to the conventions of sentimental, gothic, and historical fiction. Ann Eliza Bleecker's *The History of Maria Kittle* (1790) is basically a novel of sensibility, and Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleepwalker* (1799), a gothic novel. Both of these works are structured around the subject of Indian captivity. Drawn to the tradition through his interest in the frontier and his reading on the subject, James Fenimore Cooper also incorporated captivity materials into many of his most successful novels, including each of his much publicized *Leatherstocking Tales* (1826–41), where they are used as the basis for historical romance and adventure.

Even painters and sculptors recognized the aesthetic and dramatic potential in Indian captivity for the development of a national artistic legacy. The celebrated artist Thomas Cole based two of his paintings on captivity episodes in Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*. Also influenced by Cooper, the New York sculptor Erastus Dow Palmer (1817–1904) used Indian captivity as the subject of one of his most famous works, a marble statue called *White Captive* (1856). On display at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, this work, like the paintings of Cole, uses captivity as a means for infusing a classical art form with American subject matter. It depicts a nude young woman, in the tradition of Greek and Roman statuary, rudely tied to the stump of a tree, suggestive of the American frontier, awaiting her fate, whatever it might be.⁷⁹

Known as the *Rescue Group* (1851), a sculpture by Horatio Greenough (1805–52) uses the subject of Indian captivity for similar purposes. Portraying a white frontier mother and infant standing between an Indian warrior, who apparently is intent on abducting them, and a white woodsman, who attempts to secure their release, the *Rescue Group* uses a classical medium to illustrate the nature of the American past as a heroic blending of white European civilization and the New World wilderness. As Washburn explains, "The size of the figures represents the significance of each. The woman is tiny and frail, the Indian powerful in comparison with her, but diminutive in comparison with the Bunyanesque rescuer" (Washburn, "Introduction," xxi). For more than a century this work was displayed in front of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. (Washburn, "Introduction," xxi).

Chapter Two

The Mythology of the Captivity Narrative

A mythology is a complex of narratives that dramatizes the world vision and historical sense of a people or culture, reducing centuries of experience into a constellation of compelling metaphors.

—Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence* (1973)

Like Iceland, the United States is fortunate in having a body of narratives that cover the periods of her settlement in new lands and the violence that attended that settlement. . . . It is my contention that these captivities deserve better treatment as literature.

—Phillips D. Carleton, "The Indian Captivity," *American Literature* (1943)

The discrete historical and cultural significances of the Indian captivity narrative, however illuminating they may be in their religious, propagandistic, and visceral applications, are subordinate to the fundamental informing and unifying principle in the narratives collectively: the core of ritual acts and patterns from which the narratives derive their essential integrity.

—Richard VanDerBeets, "The Indian Captivity Narrative as Ritual," *American Literature* (1972)

The male imagination, for better or for worse, tends to transform the tale of captivity into one of adoption, to substitute the male dream of joining the Indians for the female fantasy of being dragged off by them.

—Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Return of the Vanishing American* (1968)

For what the captivity story provided was a mode of symbolic action crucial to defining the otherwise dangerous or unacknowledged meaning of women's experience of the dark and enclosing forests around them.

—Annette Kolodny, *The Land before Her* (1984)

Immensely and immediately popular in their day, captivity narratives

were not merely flashes in the publishing pan: they also maintained their appeal through the centuries. In a regular rhythm, while new captivity accounts were published, the more durable old ones were revamped and republished alongside them.¹ The reading public seemed to crave both the new and the novel as well as the old and the classic.² While the popularity of captivity narratives is well-established, the central issue behind their popularity is *why* they appealed—and continue to appeal—to so many people. Why, for example, do we as modern readers still relate to a seventeenth-century text like Mary Rowlandson's when many other popular texts of the time have lost their appeal for all but a few scholars and antiquarians? What underlying universalities exist in a work such as Rowlandson's that touch profound emotional and intellectual chords in us, just as they did in generations of readers before us?

Archetypal patterns and literary substructures form one means of explaining the continuing attraction of captivity narratives beyond the cultural contexts in which they were originally published. As Richard VanDerBeets indicates, their "cultural significances" are secondary to their primary, unifying principle, namely, "the core of ritual acts and patterns from which the narratives derive their essential integrity."³ Different ways of identifying the rituals that provide a mythological backdrop to the captivity corpus furnish different answers to why this group of texts remains so perennially captivating that it forms "a constellation of compelling metaphors."⁴

Myth-Ritual Archetypes

The most basic approach to understanding the captivity narrative's power is the theory that behind it lies an archetypal pattern—common in American literature generally—of separation, initiation, and return. As Phillips D. Carleton first noted, not only did the content of captivity narratives provide unity, but their standard formal elements of attack, capture, and escape or return also gave them coherence and definition as a group.⁵ In addition, this pattern stresses the archetypal significance of the newcomers' struggle for identity as Americans and of their interactions with Native Americans, who taught them wilderness survival but who lost the land to them (Carleton, 180). The captivity literature thus provides a means to explore the subconscious ramifications of westerly American settlement.

Included in this experience are "ritual acts and patterns"—markers for decoding the social issues underlying the archetypal pattern of capture,

initiation, and return. These are defined as human acts that seem to possess common meanings and functions despite their documentation in records that are not otherwise related. Two such ritual acts stressed in many myths, including the captivity accounts, are cannibalism and scalping. Further information on these rites comes from Sir James Frazer's classic work on myth, magic, religion, and ritual, *The Golden Bough*, first published in 1890.⁶ Because these rituals define the initiate in terms of the capturing culture, they constitute boundaries that, once crossed, also define the initiate in terms of "the other." Additionally, the captivity archetype itself can be linked to the monomyth established by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), for the narratives' primary pattern is that of the hero's initiation journey, or quest, which "is a variation of the fundamental death-rebirth archetype and traditionally involves the separation of the Hero from his culture, his undertaking a long journey, and his undergoing a series of excruciating ordeals in passing from ignorance to knowledge. In the monomyth, this consists of three stages or phases: separation, transformation, and enlightened return" (VanDerBeets, 553).

The general nature of the myth-ritual archetype explains the captivities' popularity and even cross-cultural appeal, defines their collective power as narrative acts, and draws them together into what has been called "an American genre."⁷ It applies to texts ranging from the factual—such as Rowlandson's *A True History* (1682), James Everett Seaver's *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* (1824), and James Smith's *Account* (1799)—to the largely or totally fictional—such as Ann Eliza Bleecker's *The History of Maria Kittle* (1790), Andrew Coffinberry's epic poem *The Forest Rangers* (1794), and James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826)—as well as stories about captivity in the folklore, dime novels, and even humor of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In other words, it unifies the narratives despite all other differences such as date of composition, overall length, authorship, literary genre, and gender of captive.

The Hunter-Predator Myth

In addition to the universal myth-ritual archetypes, more particular interpretations of the captivity literature have been advanced, including the hunter-predator myth. As Richard Slotkin explains, "The first colonists saw in America an opportunity to regenerate their fortunes, their spirits, and the power of their church and nation; but the means to

that regeneration ultimately became the means of violence, and the myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring metaphor of the American experience" (Slotkin, 5). Captivity by Indians not only constituted a uniquely American phenomenon but also an archetypal clash of cultures (Slotkin, 21). Thus captivity accounts encapsulated the very essence of the frontier myth, and as they evolved as literature, they continued to incorporate cultural preoccupations and symbols.

The hunter-predator myth is perhaps most clearly illustrated by two narratives: Mary Rowlandson's *A True History* (1682) and John Filson's *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke and the Adventures of Daniel Boone* (1784). The earliest separate full-length captivity narrative, Rowlandson's dramatic account of her three months' capture by Narragansetts and Nipmucks functions as a generic archetype, that is, it creates "a paradigm of personal and collective history that can be discerned as an informing structure throughout Puritan and (with modifications) in later American narrative literature" (Slotkin, 102). This text is the first and also "perhaps the best of the captivity narratives" (Slotkin, 102) owing to its skillful dramatization of the settlers' desire for emigration and adventure versus their accompanying guilt and anxiety, in other words, of their ambivalent psychic accommodation to the New World (Slotkin, 107).

As European culture became established, and as colonists began defining themselves not just in terms of their difference from, and hostility to, Indians, but also in terms of their identity as Americans, the captivity myth emphasized the captive as mediator between savagery and civilization. In this capacity, Daniel Boone, "the solitary, Indian-like hunter of the deep woods" (Slotkin, 21), became the prototypical myth-hero. Equally at home in the wilderness and the drawing room, Boone represented the archetypal balance Americans sought between nature and tradition. His story first appeared in an appendix to Jack-of-all-trades John Filson's promotion document on the geography and settlement of Kentucky. Although the section on Boone is written in the first person, it is actually Filson's literary creation from various sources. Boone's adventures, which include temporary capture and adoption by the Shawnees, constitute a set of wilderness initiations that deepen his identity, moral sense, and insight into primitive nature. Each adventure is succeeded by a return to family and civilization, where Boone can reflect on his experiences and then apply his conclusions to further his own community's success: "As a result of these rhythmic cycles of immersion and emergence, he grows to become the commanding genius

of his people, their hero-chief, and the man fit to realize Kentucky's destiny" (Slotkin, 278–79). That destiny is not to preserve the integrity of the land and its original people, the Native Americans (Slotkin, 293), but to wrest control of the whole environment through settlement and cultivation, through exploitation, through what we ironically call *progress*.

This paradigm makes it possible to trace the influence of the captivity mythology and tradition on the works of Cooper, Melville, Thoreau, and other nineteenth-century American Romantics. Although this myth of "regeneration through violence" can be illustrated with captivities by and about both genders, it seems most applicable to the male narratives, which are more likely to emphasize aggression and independence.

Freudian Interpretations

Freudian perspectives, when applied to the captivity narrative, also explain its popularity—at least in part—as an essentially male form of fantasy literature reflecting the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) American male's subconscious ambivalence when confronted by the wilderness.⁸ Two such gender-based impulses can be discerned within the captivity literature.

First, in trying to shed the constraints of civilization and merge with nature, the male imagination transforms captivity into adoption. The *male* captive thus identifies with the American Indians and the wilderness and reveals through his captivity initiation "the wild man that lives next to the mild husband at the heart of all American males" (Fiedler, 104). Two ways to illustrate this myth include analysis of what Leslie A. Fiedler calls "The Myth of Love in the Woods," the archetypal story of Pocahontas and John Smith, and "The Myth of the Good Companions in the Wilderness," the story of a European and a Native American "who find solace and sustenance in each other's love," exemplified by the fur-trapper Alexander Henry's *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories* (1809) (Fiedler, 51). Henry's text recounts the experiences of a trader captured and later adopted by American Indians in the late eighteenth century. During his captivity, he forms a strong bond of friendship and respect with his Indian family, especially with his adopted brother. Such close ties between Indian and white hunters, freed from repressive contact with white "civilization"—particularly marriage with a white woman—form the powerful prototype of such Western American narratives as Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, in which

Leatherstocking, a variant of Daniel Boone, befriends Uncas, the "last of the Mohicans," according to the same rituals evident in the Henry narrative. This provides one explanation for the lasting hold of the Leatherstocking Tales and those like them on the white (male) imagination.

Second, narratives about the *female* captive also conform to Freudian archetypes, but of course from a different perspective. Women such as Mary Rowlandson and Hannah Dustan, who survived Indian captivity without their husbands, are said to awaken subconscious male fears of impotence and castration through their ability to live through the experience without male intervention. The story of Hannah Dustan, "a New England lady who, snatched out of childbed by an Indian raiding party, fought her bloody way to freedom," initiated this approach, which can be termed "The Myth of the White Woman with a Tomahawk" (Fiedler, 51). This woman, an inversion of the Pocahontas figure, is "our other—alas, realer—mother, the Great WASP Mother of Us All, who, far from achieving a reconciliation between White men and Red, turns the weapon of the Indian against him in a final act of bloodshed and vengeance" (Fiedler, 95).

According to the Freudian archetype, whether the captivity account has a male or a female protagonist, it ultimately entails a patriarchal vision and fulfills male fantasies. For through this literature, American men can recapture the primordial dream of "a natural Eden," lost when civilization—symbolized by patriarchy—interfered.

Feminist Perspectives

Feminist revisionists sense other mythic impulses beneath the captivity narratives' popular appeal. Annette Kolodny, for example, condemns the male mythology's aggression and violence. Instead, she discerns in the women's materials symbols of their domestic aim to create and cultivate individual gardens in the wilderness as havens from the surrounding wild: "Massive exploitation and alteration of the continent do not seem to have been part of women's fantasies. They dreamed, more modestly, of locating a home and a familial human community within a cultivated garden."⁹

To illustrate the radically different female psychology, Filson's *Adventures of Daniel Boone* can be contrasted with *A Narrative of the Captivity, and Extraordinary Escape of Mrs. Francis Scott*. Scott's story initially received considerable exposure in newspaper articles published in 1785.

Her homestead on the Virginia/Kentucky border was attacked by Delawares who killed her family and took her captive. Although she managed to escape, as a woman unused to the wild she had difficulty finding food and help, and even after returning to "civilization," she remembered the wilderness experience with horror. In 1786, these two accounts by Filson and Scott appeared as complementary texts in a book published by John Trumbull, the well-known printer in Norwich, Connecticut (Kolodny, *Land*, 29). In Boone's fascination with the fertile Kentucky landscape, "the white male imagination continued to project, ever westward, its endless dream of rediscovering Paradise. As represented by the captivity narrative of Francis Scott, the white female continued to encounter only the implacable and hostile American wilderness" (Kolodny, *Land*, 31).

Daniel Boone showed the American male as victor over the American Indian, and Scott's story showed the American female as victim. But was there another kind of white woman who could accommodate herself to the wild? The answer is yes if we consider the experiences of women who were originally captured by American Indians but who remained with them—who became transculturated or transculturized, in other words.¹⁰ For example, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison*, dictated to James Everett Seaver by Jemison herself and first published in 1824, tells the story of a woman captured by French and Shawnees in 1758 at age 13 or 14 who was adopted into Seneca tribal culture and who adapted to it willingly. While Jemison's story is clearly mediated by Seaver, it still forms one of the few instances in which a transculturated captive's own voice penetrates the narrative.¹¹ In 1823, when Seaver and Jemison met, Jemison had lived among the Senecas for 65 years, had long ago taken the name Dehgewanus, had married two Indian men—first Sheninjee then, some years after she was widowed, Hiokatoo—and had a large family network of eight children (though she outlived all but three daughters) and 39 grandchildren. As Kolodny states, "Jemison's *Life* was 'revolutionary' . . . because it represented the first text in American literature to move a real-world white woman beyond the traditional captivity pattern to something approaching the *willing* wilderness accommodations of a Daniel Boone" (Kolodny, *Land*, 80). The hunter-predator and Freudian mythologies can be further differentiated from this feminist approach by considering that "In sharp contrast to the Adamic paradisaic longings of the men . . . Mary Jemison brought home and family into the cleared spaces of the wild—an act of survival, if not of romance" (Kolodny, *Land*, 80).

Kolodny acknowledges her debt to another feminist theory advanced

by Dawn Lander Gherman, whose study, "From Parlour to Tepee: The White Squaw on the American Frontier," reaches a still different conclusion regarding the mythology of the captivity literature.¹² This response begins with "the traditional image of the white woman as Civilizer: alien to the landscape, racially prejudiced and sexually inhibited" (Gherman, vii), but it suggests that this figure of woman as victim is based not so much on historical fact as on social sanction. The counterimage presented is that of "the White Squaw" (Gherman, viii), that is, the woman who breaks through the "wilderness taboo" by rebelling against white patriarchal society and finding new roles. Many of the examples used concern women who were captured by American Indians but who became acculturated or transculturated, for example, Eunice Williams, daughter of the Puritan minister John Williams, taken captive in 1704, and Mary Jemison and Frances Slocum, both taken in 1758. All three had the opportunity to return to white society; all three declined to do so. Thus, the implicit focus of this approach is what might be termed "feminine wildness", defined as "a propensity to break social taboos which restrict self-expression and exploration" (Gherman, vi).

To appreciate the range of the four approaches described above, we can apply each in turn to a single case study, the popular but puzzling narrative known as the "Panther Captivity."

A Case Study

The fictional captivity titled *A Surprising Account of the Discovery of a Lady who was taken by the Indians in the year 1777, and after making her escape, she retired to a lonely Cave, where she lived nine years* was first published in 1787 as a six-page letter by the pseudonymous Abraham Panther to a male friend and is now generally referred to as the "Panther Captivity."¹³ It proved to be so popular it was reprinted, sometimes in pirated form, several dozen times in New England and New York between 1787 and 1814.¹⁴ Subsequently, while its popularity declined among general readers, its significance increased among critics.

The account begins with the letter-writer describing to a male reader how he and a companion, Isaac Camber, travelled westward for 13 days on a hunting expedition. On the fourteenth day, they are surprised to hear a young woman singing in the wilderness at the mouth of a cave. A guard dog barks, and when the beautiful woman sees the men, she faints. She recovers when they assure her they intend her no harm, and she invites them into her cave and hospitably offers them ground nuts,

apples, Indian cake, and fresh water—the produce of the earth—before she tells her story in her own voice. Born to a good family in Albany, New York, she and her lover eloped because her father disapproved of the match. They were attacked by Indians who killed her lover, but she was able to escape into the wilderness and feed on "the spontaneous produce of the earth" (*Panther*, n. p.). After two weeks, she encountered a giant who spoke to her in an unknown language and indicated that she must sleep with him. He bound her with ropes, but she was able to bite through them and free herself. She then took the hatchet he had threatened her with, killed him with three blows, decapitated and quartered him, took the pieces into the forest, and buried them. With only a faithful dog as companion, she lived alone for nine years and sustained herself by planting corn she fortuitously found in the cave. Here the woman's narrative breaks off and Panther resumes. He tells how after some resistance she agrees to accompany them home and how she returns to her father's house. Her ailing father, much affected by her story and apparently guilt-stricken at having precipitated her elopement, faints and dies, leaving his daughter a large fortune.

The "Panther Captivity" is woven from various generic sources, including the adventure narrative (the story of the two male explorers), the captivity narrative (the Indian attack on the woman and her lover), the sentimental novel (the woman as heroine and the standard plot resolution in which her father forgives her, dies, and leaves her well provided for), and the fertility myth (the giant whom the woman kills) (Kolodny, *Land*, 60). All these elements conform to the basic archetypal pattern of capture, initiation, and return, which applies to the main characters: the woman and the two hunters. Only the unnamed woman is captured by Indians, but that action affects everything—and everyone—else, so that there is both a female and a male quest.

The woman, actually the "Lady" as the title identifies her, willingly separates herself from a patriarchal society that denies her freedom. She is initiated into a wilderness experience that in fact forces her to be independent and self-sufficient from the time her lover is "barbarously murdered" (*Panther*, n. p.) and she switches from the dependent heroine typical of sentimental fiction to the resourceful frontier woman (albeit temporarily). When the Earth offers her food, she takes it; when the giant accosts her, she strategically and ritually kills him; when she discovers corn, she plants and harvests it. Only when the two hunters find her does she revert to the sentimental heroine (for example, by fainting and then being persuaded to leave her cave) and return with them to "civiliza-

tion," where her newfound independence is validated by her changed status from penniless daughter to wealthy heiress.

The giant himself is a mythic fertility figure with ties to Indian legends about "the ritual slaying of a vegetation god" (Slotkin, 257) and to the figure of the Green Giant in the fourteenth-century alliterative poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. However, it is not a question of ascertaining whether the "Panther Captivity"'s unknown author was influenced either by Indian legends or by the medieval text, but rather of acknowledging that "any writer who involves his imagination in the literary exploitation of such mythic material as the captivity narratives seems bound to uncover the archetypal patterns concealed deep beneath the conventionalized surface form of the narratives" (Slotkin, 258).

The two hunters also embark on their own quest, which takes the form of capture, initiation, and return. The men are not so much captured as captivated by the landscape and by the emblem of civilization, the Lady of the Cave. They are initiated into the surprising discovery that the land is not necessarily there for hunters to exploit, but perhaps more importantly for settlers to cultivate (Kolodny, *Land*, 64). Indeed, the woman cultivator has beat them to it. As Panther observes after tracing the source of the singing he hears, which is the only woman-made sound in the wild (as opposed to the man-made sound of gunshot): "We desired her to be under no uneasiness, told her we were travellers, that we came only to view the country but that in all our travels we had not met with any thing that had surprised us so much as her extraordinary appearance, in a place which we imagined totally unfrequented" (*Panther*, n. p.). Panther and Camber return eastward with the lady and with newfound knowledge about themselves and their role in the wilderness.

Exploring the myth-ritual archetypes of the "Panther Captivity" inevitably involved some aspects of the hunter-predator myth, which can now be examined separately. Several commentators point out the significance of the story-within-the-story of the "Panther Captivity," that is, the lady's tale, beginning in 1776, the year she and her lover escape from her father into the woods. Although the text was not published for another decade, it is easy to see it as an allegory of the new nation's birth. The work thus dramatizes Americans' dilemma at the point of independence between maintaining ties to Europe (symbolized by the "Panther Captivity"'s affinities to the traditional—Puritan—captivity form) and acculturating themselves to the native wilderness (symbolized by the fertility myth associations). Both choices involved violence and change.

Perhaps the "Panther Captivity"'s contemporary popularity lay in its ability to simultaneously articulate *both* alternatives and suggest "many levels of human and colonial anxiety in a single, emotionally evocative, symbolic drama" (Slotkin, 259). Thus, in this interpretation, the narrative deals with issues of independence, identity, and power as applied to the national and to the individual consciousness. One of the "Panther Captivity"'s analogues, Filson's *Discovery*, "quieted fears of white male degeneracy in the woods by substituting for those fears the heroic myth of white male conquest of the wilderness" (Kolodny, *Land*, 56) in the figure of Daniel Boone. To understand how the "Panther Captivity" itself addressed corresponding fears "for the fate of white women in the wilderness" (Kolodny, *Land*, 57), we must next turn to a Freudian interpretation.

Secure in their male companionship, Panther and Camber determine "to penetrate the Western wilderness as far as prudence and safety would permit" to hunt the startled game, which, "as we had our muskets contributed not a little to our amusement and support" (*Panther*, n. p.). But despite the phallic subtext, the "rich and fertile land" is not dominated by these men or by any of the male characters: not the lady's father, nor her lover, nor the Indians, nor the "gigantic figure" of the cave. It is the newly independent lady who controls the land and to whom the Earth gives up its "spontaneous produce" (*Panther*, n. p.). Here indeed is "The Myth of the White Woman with a Tomahawk," the story of a woman who delivers herself from a fate worse than death and from death itself by axing, decapitating, and quartering the giant—by symbolically castrating then killing him. All the male characters are displaced by this woman: she survives her father, whose abusive authoritarianism had initially caused her rebellion; she survives her lover, who is unable to defend himself against the Indians, let alone her; she outwits the Indians by quietly withdrawing while they are celebrating; she survives the giant by pitting her mental strength against his physical strength; and finally, she denies Panther and Camber their fantasy of a masculine wilderness adventure untouched by a woman's (corrupting) influence. The male perspective of such a Freudian interpretation would see this female figure as distorted and defeminized, except that by the end of her story the lady obligingly slips back into the passive role of sentimental heroine. However, the figure undergoes a metamorphosis within a feminist mythology.

The "Panther Captivity" is unusual because "it adhered to the essential male fantasy of woodland intimacy while, at the same time, it offered

a positive image of the white woman's capacity to survive and plant gardens in that same wilderness" (Kolodny, *Land*, 66–67). In its dual interest, it symbolically fulfilled opposite fantasies. For as women really did arrive on the frontier, agriculture began to displace hunting for subsistence (Kolodny, *Land*, 67). Yet even though cultivation—symbolized by women's gardens—historically marked the overturn of the frontier, ultimately "the nation took to its heart the heroic mythology of the wilderness hunter, eschewing the hybridized romance of the wilderness cultivator suggested by the Panther Captivity" (Kolodny, *Land*, 67). The independence and identity of the woman cultivator were too threatening to the male hunter, so the stronger male stereotypes prevailed. In the "Panther Captivity," America simply was not ready for the figure of the White Squaw. A final issue of feminist significance concerns the true identity of the pseudonymous author, Abraham Panther. The author has still not been identified, though all previous commentators have assumed he is male. Yet given the feminist subtext, it is tantalizing to speculate that the author could well have been a woman wishing to present a female viewpoint under the guise of the outrageously fake pen name Abraham Panther. Certainly, it is well-known that women who published in the eighteenth century often did so under a pseudonym.

The "Panther Captivity" is almost certainly derived from Filson's *Adventures* (originally published three years earlier) and, in turn, it almost certainly influenced later American literary texts, including Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly* (1799). Applying all four structural approaches to the "Panther Captivity" works particularly well because its disparate elements invite deeper examination. But other captivity narratives do not necessarily respond to such a multi-layered approach.

This chapter has presented the dominant mythologies of the captivity narrative. The diversity of both the texts and the analyses suggests that the material offers literary critics and cultural theoreticians a particularly rich resource for continued interpretation. However, because each approach tends to use a restricted number of narratives to illustrate its thesis, we do not believe that any single one applies consistently to the entire corpus. As we suggest throughout this book, valid mythologies to account for the appeal of these narratives are probably as varied and complex as the texts themselves.

Chapter Three

Images of Indians

They are so guileless and so generous . . . that no one would believe it who has not seen it.

—Christopher Columbus, *The Letter by Christopher Columbus Describing the Result of His First Voyage* (1493)

. . . for Mercy who'd expect / From *Cannibals* that gorge on Human Flesh, / And Swill like *Polypheme*, the reeking Gore?

—John Maylem, *Gallic Perfidy: A Poem* (1758)

Such monsters of barbarity ought certainly to be excluded from all the privileges of human nature, and hunted down as wild beasts, without pity or cessation.

—Maty Smith, *An Affecting Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mary Smith* (1815)

Notwithstanding all that has been said against the Indians, in consequence of their cruelties to their enemies—cruelties that I have witnessed, and had abundant proof of—it is a fact that they are naturally kind, tender and peaceable towards their friends, and strictly honest; and that those cruelties have been practised, only upon their enemies, according to their idea of justice.

—James Everett Seaver, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jenison* (1824)

The Character of the savage mind, naturally fierce, revengeful and cruel, will not receive and cherish the introduction of the arts and sciences: but on the contrary renders it more debased and inveterate—therefore, the policy of a great nation ought to be, and is, to overawe and intimidate, and not to extirpate them.

—Jane Lewis, *Narrative of the Captivity and Providential Escape of Mrs. Jane Lewis* (1833)

For more than four centuries, Indian captivity narratives provided white audiences, both European and American, with a major source of infor-