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“TROUBLES OF A DEEPER DYE THAN ARE COMMONLY
EXPERIENCED BY MORTALS”: THE DEFINITION OF THE
SELF AND OTHER IN THREE INDIAN CAPTIVITY
NARRATIVES

I

The Indian captivity narratives spanning four centuries from the 1540's until the first decades of the twentieth century have provided a fascinating research topic both for historians and literary scholars alike. Apart from functioning as the forerunners of the American novel, Indian captivity narratives served such purposes as the promotion of a national ideology, the construction of a privileged WASP identity, and the reinforcement of the Puritan value system. Out of the numerous accounts special interest was assigned to the captivity narratives commemorating the experiences of white women forcibly removed from their homes as a result of Indian attacks. While the returned heroine committed her experiences to paper, in addition to depicting the wilderness and commemorating the survival of the basic tenets of Puritanism in hostile circumstances she unwittingly preserved the image of the Indian captors as well.

The captive white female occupied a unique place in the trans-cultural dynamics of the American frontier and was compelled to launch a multifaceted identity definition effort. The Indians viewed her as the representative of the hostile WASP society as 3333 she was forced into a position of a minority within the respective Native American communities, and prior to her involuntary departure from the Anglo-American world she was restricted into its private sphere. Utilizing such techniques as stereotyping, mythic exclusionism, establishment of versus patterns, and therapeutic self-justification the captivity narratives placed a heavy

emphasis on “identity work.” This resulted not only in the clear delineation of the cultural spaces between the WASP world and Indian America, but following Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, it also entailed a cultural displacement process leading to the redefinition of Anglo (American) identity at the expense of Native American subjectivity (Faery 60).

Cultural projection, defined by Merelman as “the conscious or unconscious effort by a social group and its allies to place new images of itself before other social groups and the general public” (3) was a crucial component of this identity redefinition effort during which not a given minority presented new images of itself, but a representative of a purported majority described the muted. According to Merelman hegemonic cultural projection means the description of a minority culture by a representative of a majority, while counter-hegemonic cultural projection refers to the effort of a minority group to describe or interpret its experiences in the direction of the dominant section of society. Syncretization and polarization allude to the combination of the motives and elements of both cultures, and to the rejection of the presented images on both sides respectively.

Aiming to examine the respective inverted cultural projection capability this essay will take a closer look at three captivity narratives representing three different periods of American history. Mary Rowlandson’s *The Sovereignty and Goodness of GOD, together with the Faithfulness of his Promises displayed: being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (henceforth: *Narrative*) was published in 1682, Mary Jemison’s work, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* was compiled by James E. Seaver in 1823 to be released in 1824, and *A Narrative of the Capture and Subsequent Sufferings of Mrs. Rachel Plummer, Written by Herself* was published in 1839.

II

Mary Rowlandson’s “Narrative” is considered the first best-selling work by a female author, and in fact is the best-known example of the genre. The work set against the historical background of King Philip’s War, a conflict, which according to Laurel Thatcher Ulrich is considered in proportionality one of the bloodiest wars in American history (Faery 27) commemorates the eleven week ordeal of the protagonist. Mrs. Rowlandson, a middle-aged wife of a Puritan minister is one of the twenty-four captured individuals kidnapped by Narragansett Indians

following an attack on the town of Lancaster in February 1675. Having been forcibly removed from her family she is carried away into the New England wilderness with her wounded six-year old daughter Sarah. During her captivity Mrs. Rowlandson would serve as a servant to the Narragansett chief Quinnapin and his squaw, while in addition to a grueling one hundred fifty mile northward march she would endure the loss of Sarah, would participate in a meeting with King Philip, along with achieving the status of productive membership in the tribe by demonstrating her sewing skills. After being redeemed for 25 dollars subsequent to ransom negotiations in which she actively participated she would gain her freedom.

As it can be expected, Mrs. Rowlandson's cultural projection originates from the hegemonic point of view as her self-description at the beginning of the ordeal: "The Indians were as thick as the trees: it seemed as if there had been a thousand Hatchets going at once [...] I my self in the midst, and no Christian soul near me, and yet how hath the Lord preserved me in safety?" (445) suggests the image of a pious Puritan entrapped by savage heathens. It is noteworthy that the author uses religious and cultural categories to emphasize her separation or "value distance" (Bauer 678) from the Other, moreover, by simply referring to her captors as Indians, she forgoes the assignment of tribal designation. The distancing effort strengthening the protagonist's religious commitment and reinforcing the ecological dividing line between the two cultures also means that the Other is repeatedly defined in spiritual terms in addition to being compared to such predatory animals as "hell-hounds, and ravenous Beasts" (437).

Mrs. Rowlandson's self-depiction includes such images as a Christian woman entrapped in the wilderness, a grieving mother deprived of her family, and a WASP urbanite reluctant to taste Indian fare while failing to negotiate the obstacles put in her way by nature. In return the description of the captors emphasizes them as pagans, and highlights their advanced survival skills. Resorting to stereotypy via the Noble Savage image, Mrs. Rowlandson's description of the Indians ranges from "inhumane creatures" (439) through "a great Indian" (443) to considering Quinnapin her best Indian friend (450). The protagonist's invocation of the Noble Savage stereotype suggests a psychological progress as removed from the "structure of experience" (Howe 96) the captive attempts to re-establish her control over her fate, along with that of space and time as well. The detailed description of the route taken helps her to assume control over

the seemingly uncontrollable flow of the events and viewing the Indians in stereotypical fashion assists her in constructing her experience in terms of the Manichean perspective promoted by the Puritan mindset. Furthermore, the invocation of the Noble Savage stereotype serves a therapeutic purpose as Mrs. Rowlandson, a lone captive surrounded by hostile Indians, deprived of both a physical and spiritual home attempts to find a figurative shelter in the wilderness.

The invocation of versus patterns also implies this objective. By casting the captive-Indian relationship in the dynamics of the cruel, savage heathen—pious, refined, WASP female dyad, the “value distance” dividing the two cultures is increased. The *Narrative* also contains examples of therapeutic self-justification. The writing process providing a sense of control over the events alleviates the protagonist’s psychological suffering and the author locating the cause for her present ordeal in the omission and negligence of WASP religious obligations and in the attendant decline of spiritual commitment suggests the omnipotence of the Christian worldview:

I then remembered how careless I had been of Gods holy time, how many Sabbaths I had lost and mispent, and how evily I had walked in Gods sight; which lay so close unto my spirit, that it was easie for me to see how righteous it was with God to cut off the thread of my life, and cast me out of his presence for ever (440)

In addition to the individual level, the “Narrative” as an example of a rising colonial literary culture produced “at the margins of an imperial, Eurocentric, geocultural imagination” (Bauer 667) helps to refute the image of Otherness attributed to English settlers of North America. While in *A Glass for the People of New England in Which They May See Themselves* (London 1676) Samuel Groome lamented that “colonial Americans had degenerated into greed, barbarity, and cruelty from their original English virtues” (qtd. in Bauer 670) and Nathaniel Carpenter asserted that Europeans leaving the Old Continent “by little and little decline...and suffer alteration ‘from the original virtues of superior European culture” (qtd. in Bauer 671), Rowlandson emphasizing the importance of rectitude and piety in the harsh wilderness testifies to the strength of the colonial character and provides a counter history to imperial historiographic narratives (Bauer 673).

Adhering to J. Clifford’s view of culture as an “open-ended, creative dialogue of subcultures, of insiders and outsiders” (qtd. in Campbell and

Keane 16) the cultural projection process is far from static as the shifts in the protagonist's self-perceived position influence the classification process. Whereas hegemonic cultural projection is suggested by the insistence on the Noble Savage stereotype, Mrs. Rowlandson's references to the tyrannical practices of her captors, "They made use of their tyrannical power whilst they had it" (460), implies her subordinate position and a potential counter-hegemonic cultural projection effort.

In the dynamics of the captivity experience the Indian was considered to have occupied a superior position both from a physical and cultural standpoint. Mrs. Rowlandson's initial inability to negotiate such natural obstacles as crossing a river without difficulty, or properly sitting on a horse appears to justify the Native American derision of Anglo education and by extension WASP culture. Being ridiculed for her failure to sit on a horse properly, in addition to being denied a place to sleep in the wigwam and threatened with cannibalism, the protagonist is forced in the position of the Other. The condescending attitude of the Indians foreshadows the Onondaga chief, Canassetego's dismissal of colonial education expressed during the signing of the Treaty of Lancaster forging an alliance between the Northeastern colonies and the Iroquois Confederacy in 1744: "Several of our Young People were formerly brought up at the Colleges of the Northern Provinces [...] but when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods [...] were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, or Counsellors; they were totally good for nothing" (qtd. in Franklin 504).

Not only Mrs. Rowlandson can be considered an authentic authorial voice, but her captivity induced culture projection also assigns her the role of culture mediator, or culture broker. In addition to hegemonic and counter-hegemonic cultural projection the author's inclusion of Indian words into her text (Nux, papoos, sannup, samp, wampum) suggests syncretization, and the protagonist's demonstration of an increased appreciation of Native American food eventually indicates a partial identification with her captors. This qualified appreciation of the Other is also shown by the protagonist's emotional farewell to the Narragansett tribe, and by the painstakingly detailed description of different episodes of Indian life including a *powwow* preceding a major battle. Nevertheless, the text is replete with references to impregnable boundaries between the two cultures. The controversial statement: "I have been in the midst of those roaring Lyons, and Salvage Bears, that feared neither God, nor Man, nor the Devil [...] yet not one of them ever offered me the least

abuse of unchastity to me, in word or action,” (463) attempts to prove that miscegenation did not take place, and the recurring allusions to paganism draw a spiritual dividing line as well. Having returned to the Anglo community inspired by the partial modification of her mono-cultural perspective Mary Rowlandson emerges as an unwitting cultural mediator displaying a reluctant understanding of the intercultural dynamics of the American frontier.

The oral account of Mary Jemison’s life compiled into a text by James E. Seaver in 1823 bearing the title *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* (henceforth: *NarrativeMJ*) appears to surpass the guidelines of the genre. While most captivity narratives are written after the return to the captive’s home, Mrs. Jemison shares her life story with the readers not as a former captive, but as an integral part of Seneca society. Having been carried away at the age of 14 in 1758 after a Shawnee raid on her father’s farm at Marsh Creek, on the Pennsylvania frontier she was sold by her captors to the Seneca. According to the Native American custom of substituting dead family members with captives, two sisters mourning the loss of their brother adopted the young girl into the tribe. They renamed her Dickewamis, or Dehgewanus, meaning either “Two Falling Voices,” or “Pretty Girl.” Consequently, she would spend the rest of her life with the Indians and her two marriages would result in 8 children and 39 grandchildren.

Whereas *NarrativeMJ* begins with the harrowing details of the capture and the subsequent death of Mary’s parents, the work cannot be considered a full-fledged captivity narrative. The changes of the protagonist’s names indicate this as well. She is captured as Mary, and soon turns into Dickewamis. During this period she experiences the traumas of forced separation from her family along with the loss of her parents. Mary at the beginning of the captivity experience defines herself in the traditional manner as a beleaguered orphan apprehensive of the future. She points out the cruelty and paganism of the Indians: with such terms as “those savages,” (70) and “cruel monsters” (71). The adoption with its ceremonial aspects, including a cleansing bath, and change of apparel indicates the start of a new life and the assumption of a new identity as her self-definition and self-image changes from an orphaned WASP girl, to Indian novice. Whereas Mary is an orphan, Dickewamis considering her adoption ” a happy lot” (78) and immersed so far into Indian culture as telling the change of time by the harvest and hunting seasons found a new family. Despite the indications of a successful

passage over cultural boundaries, Mary-Dickewamis becomes despondent and considers a failed attempt of white traders to free her a year into her stay with the Indians the beginning of her second captivity. “My sudden departure and escape from them, seemed like a second captivity, and for a long time I brooded the thoughts of my miserable situation with almost as much sorrow and dejection as I had done those of my first sufferings” (81).

Upon a closer look at Mary Jemison’s cultural projection numerous conclusions can be made. First of all the very process is far from homogeneous and static as the self-perceived position of the protagonist continuously changes. While the description of the early ordeal might warrant the hegemonic point of view, the story unfolds upon an elderly woman’s narration to a WASP male. Consequently, paralleling the cultural practices of Native Americans, Mrs. Jemison provides an oral account which similarly to the slave narratives, as in the case of William Lloyd Garrison prefacing Frederick Douglass’ work, gains mainstream approval only after passing through the screening and interpretation process authorized by the contemporary male-dominated literary establishment. Accordingly, Seaver’s rendition of Mrs. Jemison’s words meets Siemerling’s criteria of written orality making the vernacular emerge through the written codes of the dominant (14–15). Thus, an Anglo woman supposedly immersed in Indian ways and utilizing Native American means of cultural production finds an outlet for her words through the writing of a WASP male.

Certainly, while the protagonist’s distancing effort and use of racial epithets at the beginning of her captivity experience might refer to a hegemonic point of view, one should not forget that Mary, still a child at this point, is forced in the position of a minority both in Anglo and Indian culture. In fact her vulnerable position and exposure to the whims of her adopting sisters suggest a counter-hegemonic angle, as she is forcibly assigned the status of a minority. Moreover, she does not have a say in her marriage as she is compelled to become Sheninjee’s wife. “my sisters told me that I must go and live with one of them, whose name was Shenin-jee” (81). Moreover, not being allowed to speak English, she shares the fate of the muted as well. Whereas Dickewamis’ marriage indicates that she became an integral member of the Native American community and at the same time marks the end of the captivity stage in her life, marital assimilation into the Indian tribe notwithstanding she continues to describe Indians in the familiar stereotypical fashion. Her depiction of

Sheninjee as: a “noble man; large in stature; elegant in his appearance; generous in his conduct; courageous in war; a friend to peace, and a great lover of justice [...] Yet [...] an Indian.” (82) brings Cadwallader Colden’s view of the Noble Savage to mind: “The Five Nations are a poor Barbarous People, under the darkest Ignorance, and yet a bright and noble Genius shines thro’ these black Clouds. None of the greatest Contempt to Death than these Barbarians have done, when Life and Liberty came in Competition: Indeed, I think our Indians have out-done the Romans in this particular” (405).

Since the narrative can be divided into two parts according to the naming process including the Mary-Dickewamis phase and the protagonist’s status as a spouse, the respective results of the cultural projection effort vary as well. Whereas in the Mary-Dickewamis phase she departs from the position of the Other and begins to appreciate the intercultural dynamics of the frontier from the vantage point of the Indians, the impact of Anglo-created stereotypes cannot be erased. While she interprets her experiences accrued during her transformation from white captive to Indian maiden in a positive light, the influence of WASP stereotypes is further demonstrated by the protagonist’s successful effort in saving the life of a young white captive. This episode can partially be interpreted as a subconscious invocation of the Pocahontas image, and also as an attempt to improve on the reputation of the Amerindians’ cruelty.

Whereas her description of the two adopting sisters as “peaceable and mild in their disposition; temperate and decent in their habits, and very tender and gentle towards [her]” (79) suggests the development of an emotional bond, she never fails to mention her fear of their wrath. Another striking feature is her understanding attitude towards the cruelty of the Indians as she points out that this feared practice is never self-serving and it is carried out within the smaller social context: “It is family, and not national, sacrifices amongst the Indians, that has given them an indelible stamp as barbarians, and identified their character with the idea which is generally formed of unfeeling ferocity, and the most abandoned cruelty” (78). While Mary Rowlandson resorts to the use of stereotypy in order to separate herself from the racial and cultural Other, Mary Jemison immersed into Indian society attempts to preserve a piece of her original WASP self, thereby slowing the assimilation process.

Although the description of these Indians appears to be empathic and positive, she laments about the negative and disastrous impact of the

introduction of “ardent spirits” (84), into the Native American community. While she appreciates the morality of Indians: “No people can live more happy than the Indians did in times of peace, before the introduction of spirituous liquors amongst them [...] The moral character of the Indians was (if I may be allowed the expression) uncontaminated. Their fidelity was perfect [...] they were strictly honest; they despised deception and falsehood; [...] They were temperate in their desires, moderate in their passions, and candid and honorable in the expression of their sentiments on every subject of importance” (97), her life is also tragically impacted by the dangers of alcohol abuse as all her three sons die because of alcohol-induced conflicts. Also, while the impact of alcohol abuse appears to take center stage in Mary Jemison’s work, in Mary Rowlandson’s “Narrative” the only reference to the drunkenness of Indians is found at the end of her text when she recalls her master becoming influenced by spirits:

“My Master after he had had his drink, quickly came ranting into the Wigwam again [...] He was the first Indian I saw drunk all the while that I was amongst them” (461).

Mary Jemison’s statement: “Indians must and will be Indians” (85) can be interpreted both as a reinforcement of the pride and strong identity of the Native Americans, but also it can function as a condescending assertion, referring to the lack of maturity of the respective race. One of the obvious signs of Mary Jemison’s immersion into the Seneca community is her own self-image and her intention to share the alliance of the Seneca with the British against the Americans in the War of Independence. The use of the term: “Our Indians” (91) or her indignation at the American attack on the Seneca settlements clearly indicates that she views the Americans as the Other. Also, she justifies an Indian ambush on a frontier community as a proportionate retaliation for the suffering of the Native American race: “The next summer after Sullivan’s campaign, our Indians, highly incensed at the whites for the treatment they had received, and the sufferings which they had consequently endured, determined to obtain some redress by destroying their frontier settlements” (106).

The process of Othering the Anglo intensifies in the Indian spousal stage. In providing a biography within a biography, whites such as Ebenezer Allen are described in the honest Indian—devilish, deceptive Anglo dyad. She is especially indignant at Allen’s deceitful arrangement of a peace treaty while arbitrary using wampum, thus misappropriating a Native American cultural symbol. Also Allen is accused of murdering a

business associate along with perpetrating cruelties similar to that of the Indians. Moreover, by emphasizing the moral weakness of a relative, George Jemison, who initiated a fraudulent deal eventually leading to the loss of her land, the protagonist further reinforces the Otherness of the Anglo.

The description of her second husband, Hiokatoo as a brave, proud warrior, yet intimidating and cruel to his enemies: “Although war was his trade from his youth till old age and decrepitude stopt his career, he uniformly treated me with tenderness, and never offered an insult” (129) is another manifestation of the Noble Savage image. The death of her husbands and her three sons appears to loosen her commitment to the Indian community as she ends the narrative with her chief lament over the loss of children and reiterates her adherence to WASP values “Nor have I ever been in debt to any other hands than my own for the plenty that I have shared. My vices, that have been suspected, have been but few” (160). Nevertheless, she makes a reference to being suspected with witchcraft, thus being Othered by Indians for the appearance and light complexion of her children: “It was believed for a long time, by some of our people, that I was a great witch; but they were unable to prove my guilt, and consequently I escaped the certain doom of those who are convicted of that crime, which, by Indians, is considered as heinous as murder” (160).

Mary Jemison’s cultural projection informed with a counter-hegemonic charge both to the British and the Americans primarily originates from the Seneca point of view. In retracing her life she projects herself as scared youth, Indian maiden, Indian mother, landowner, and alleged witch. She starts her captivity experience from a hegemonic point of view, which soon shifts into a counter-hegemonic one. She is subordinated to the Indians due to her age and lack of physical power. She refers to herself as a “poor little defenseless girl; without the power or means of escaping” (70). One must not forget however, that the adoption and immersion into the tribe was not her decision, that is, she was treated like an object, or a commodity in the zero sum game of the replenishment of the losses of the tribe with captives. It is also noteworthy, that she takes the place of a man, or a fallen warrior and her subordinate position continues within the Seneca tribe, which, in an interesting sidelight, practiced matrimony.

Her marriages result in intra-tribal integration and sharing the Seneca’s fate after taking sides in the Revolutionary War. Having achieved actual

membership in the tribe she assumes the minority position of the Seneca, thereby presenting a counter-hegemonic point of view towards the British and the Americans as well. Moreover, as an oral narrator or a simple story-teller she is subordinated to written culture, her words are sanitized by the compiler of the Narrative, and it is Dr. Seaver, having the power of interpretation, who emphasizes the text's heuristic and patriotic value. Consequently, the power to define is in the hands of the editor, as he condescendingly protects himself from the potential inaccuracies of the account by references to the "advanced age of eighty years" and "destitution of education" (51).

Ironically, however, the Narrative offers another interpretation as Mary Jemison, virtually a member of the Seneca tribe evolves into the Intellectual Savage "capable of surviving equally in two worlds by tenaciously retaining the ritual apparatus of primal people [...] (while) attaining the intellectual and communications paraphernalia of the dominant societies" (Highwater 12). The witchcraft episode notwithstanding she is fully acculturated into Indian society, yet she preserves her WASP values. As one possible interpretation of her Indian name Two Falling Voices suggests, she continuously had to contend with the dilemma of liminality. It is more than a mere coincidence that toward the end of her life she assumes a name emphasizing her racial and cultural origins, thereby making the "White Woman of the Genesee" (Namias 4) a full-fledged culture mediator between two worlds.

As far as grisly details of harrowing ordeals are concerned Rachel Plummer's account surpasses the previous two texts. Captured with her eighteen-month old son James Pratt after a Comanche raid on Parker's Fort, Texas on May 19, 1836 she was forced to accompany the tribe on its march across the Southwest. Unlike Mary Rowlandson and Mary Jemison, she was brutalized and raped by her captors. Caught while attempting to run away with her toddler, she was dragged by her hair, severely whipped, beaten, and tied up. Moreover, she was not only separated from her son or her loved ones, but the Indians murdered her newborn baby as well. While rejecting integration into the tribe she purposely maintained her distance from her captors, her physical prowess and fighting skills in defeating both her young and old mistress earned the respect of the tribe's leaders. Whereas having been purchased by Comancheros, or Mexican traders she gained freedom and was reunited with the remnants of her family, the physical and psychological toll of the

eighteen-month captivity contributed to an early death less than a year after her release.

Following the well-established mold she presents herself at the beginning of her ordeal as a captive entrapped by a barbarically cruel enemy: “As I was leaving, I looked back at the place where I was one hour before, happy and free, and now in the hands of a ruthless, savage enemy” (337). The use of the term “enemy” further reinforces the distance she wants to maintain from her captors. Although writing for her is a rather painful process, she targets her text to the Anglo audience or to “her christian reader,” (338) further reinforcing the notion of hegemonic cultural projection.

It is also noteworthy that despite her harrowing ordeal Mrs. Plummer is able to provide an exhausting catalogue-like description of the flora and fauna of the countryside as she states: “Notwithstanding my sufferings, I could not but admire the country” (338–339). Moreover, besides the recurring expressions of “savage, enemy,” she compares her captors to “enraged lions and hungry vultures.” (341). The target audience is the prospective American traveler lured to the natural treasures of the area by the spirit of Manifest Destiny.

One cannot help but notice the exaggerated, overly grotesque description of her second child’s murder. The description of the infant’s killing is so brutal and graphically bizarre, that not only it stretches the reader’s imagination, but brings the question of the author’s credibility to mind. Another incongruity is indicated by the author’s placement of the Indians in a positive light after the clearly sensationalistic description of the baby’s death: “But in praise to the Indians, I must say, that they gave me time to dig a hole in the earth and bury it. After having performed this last service to the lifeless remains of my dear babe, I sat me down and gazed with joy on the resting place of my now happy infant” (342). Here of course a parallel can be discovered with Mary Rowlandson’s account as she also highlights the Indian burial of Sarah and the subsequent emphatic treatment received from her captors. While Plummer’s description reminds the reader of the Noble Savage concept, its cruel irony suggests that the heroine became emotionally desensitized to her suffering.

Consequently, the author responds to her utterly hopeless situation by demonizing her captors. While Mary Rowlandson and Mary Jemison’s description of Indian life and customs suggest the broadening of their mono-cultural perspective, Mrs. Plummer steadfastly remains on

Eurocentrist ground, as even the ethnographic section of her Narrative begins with this caveat: "I shall next speak of the manners and customs of the Indians, and in this I shall be brief—as their habits are so ridiculous that this would be of but little interest to any" (355). Her description of the Indians originates from the WASP perspective and she constructs such versus patterns as nomadic Natives-settled Anglo community, primitive Native language-refined English communication, idolatry, heresy v. Christian commitment, inhumane cannibals v. noble Americans. She even considers their bravery as a result of a beastlike attitude: "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" (360).

Mythic exclusionism can be discerned in the description of her adventures encountered in a cave in the Rocky Mountains. Having discovered a cave at the foot of the mountain she gains the permission of her mistress to explore it and being exhausted by the trip she sits down close to an underground waterfall. While asleep she not only meets her child, but she encounters a divine figure, who provides her with physical and mental solace. The two days and one night spent in the cave give her psychological strength to bear up to the upcoming ordeals. Resorting to the Christian God reinforces her separation from her tormentors. At the same time, despite her steadfast refusal of crossing cultural boundaries, she adopts Indian image construction techniques as well. Tortured by fatigue and desperation she allows her dreams "to substantially enter into and shape her experience" (Highwater 79) and during this unwitting vision quest she "includes in her grasp of reality everything that is felt, experienced, dreamed about, envisioned, and hoped for" (Highwater 107). Reinforced and reinvigorated by this mystical experience she also earns the respect of the tribe. Her bravery and physical prowess demonstrated during fighting both of her mistresses elicits this response from the elders: "You are brave to fight—good to a fallen enemy—you are directed by the Great Spirit" (353)

Mrs. Plummer's cultural projection appears to be steadfastly hegemonic, as she does not even make an attempt to understand her captors' ways of life. Yet in a form of counter-hegemonic cultural projection she points out the secondary position of women within the tribe, thereby referring to the fact that despite her hegemonic vantage point she was compelled to perform counter-hegemonic cultural projection as well. "No woman is admitted into any of their Councils; nor is she allowed to

enquire what their councils have been. When they move, the women do not know where they are going. They are no more than servants, and are looked upon and treated as such” (355).

Moreover, the Narrative recalls the jeremiad function of its seventeenth century counterparts as the author perceiving a divine plan behind her capture and redemption considers her ordeals as a warning to those left behind: “When I indulge in a retrospect of the past, and all my trials and sufferings are brought in view to memories eye; whilst my heart bleeds anew over those scenes of sorrow and tribulation, through which it was the will of God I should pass, I feel a joyous hope [...] I feel rejoiced to think that all is well with it. Yes, with the eyes of faith, directed by a firm reliance on the promises of God, I can see its pure spirit mingling with those of the blessed around the eternal throne of the Most High God” (364).

Rachel Plummer’s account upholds the notion of the savage, racial, and cultural Other. Her text serves the purposes of the larger community as it is deemed an integral part of Texas history, and written during the time of the independence struggle against Mexico it further promotes the American identity against that of the Native American. In her polarizing description of the Indians she does not even attempt to be a culture mediator as despite the hard-earned respect of her captors the hatred of the enemy was never erased from her heart.

The abovementioned small digressions notwithstanding Rachel Plummer’s cultural projection remains hegemonic as she intends to perpetuate her sufferings for the WASP reader: “and now I ask you, my christian reader, to pause” (338). Despite the fact that she penetrates Indian culture by learning to communicate with her captors in their own language all through her experience she remains an outsider and does not even attempt to achieve a partial understanding of her captors’ life. The purpose of her “identity work” is on the one hand to recreate an own self, but also to erase the Native American one. In this tragic zero sum game the Indian community is ironically entrapped in the position of the Other.

III

Whereas the conditions of capture and the subsequent ordeal along with the likely outcome of either release or integration into Indian society varied to a great extent, the captive woman, whose body served as a site of an ideological struggle (Faery 41) performed not only a culture production, but a culture projection function as well. Cultural projection, however is a fluid concept and the captive woman while starting from a hegemonic point of view was soon forced into the position of a minority, or the muted. Torn from Anglo society, on the one hand she longed to reestablish her ties to her former home, on the other as the racial, cultural, and sexual Other from the point of view of her captors she was forced into a secondary position. Ironically, she also perceived her captors as the racial, cultural, and sexual Other. In this mutual Othering process, as she wrote, while the Indians Othered her in action, cultural projection took many forms. While the captive woman's attempts to increase the value distance along with frequent references to the brutality of her captors appears to suggest a hegemonic vantage point, being part of a group forced into the secondary or private sphere of the tribe, the perpetuation of the details of her ordeal could qualify as counter-hegemonic cultural projection.

It is also noteworthy that the three narratives display the signs of syncretization as well. All captives were unwittingly immersed into the culture of their captors, as in Mary Rowlandson's case this is demonstrated by her attraction to Indian food, Mary Jemison shares the plight of the Seneca, and even Rachel Plummer learns the language of her masters. Another important element is the recognition of the heuristic value of the captivity experience. That is the tribulation becomes a learning process. The woman captives forced to reestablish their identity learned the most important lesson as they put their own physical and psychological limits to the test, and all agreed that the experience prepared them to face the pitfalls of life more effectively. An additional significant aspect is the captive's attitude to writing. Mrs. Rowlandson continuously took notes in the Bible she received from a Praying Indian, Mary Jemison produced an oral history of her life, and Mrs. Plummer became traumatized by the recalling of her ordeal.

As Mary Mason argues, "the self-discovery of female identity seems to acknowledge the real presence and recognition of another consciousness,

and the disclosure of female self is linked to the identification of some other. (Consequently), identity is grounded through relation to the chosen other” (qtd. in Heilbrun 24). While the heroines of the above three captivity narratives did not choose the Other they had to face, all three went a long way in the self-discovery and identity establishment process. These three women separated by centuries, and the cultural geography of the United States share a common self-development struggle as while all of them begin with a similar experience, their “errand in the wilderness” concludes with different results.

Mary Rowlandson sees her ordeal as a milestone in her self-development and builds a partial understanding of her captors’ culture while Mary Jemison physically becomes the Other herself. Finally, Rachel Plummer attempting to deny the impossible becomes an unwitting subscriber to Antonio Machado-Ruiz’s thesis, that is despite all cultural, racial, and political barriers, we all must admit “the essential Heterogeneity of being, leading to an inscrutable *otherness* from which oneness must always suffer” (qtd. in Highwater 11).

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