ETHNOGENESIS AND CAPTIVITY: STRUCTURING TRANSATLANTIC DIFFERENCE

IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC, 1776-1823

M. Omar Siddiqi

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APPROVED:

D. Harland Hagler, Major Professor
Clark A. Pomerleau, Committee Member
Guy Chet, Committee Member
Richard B. McCaslin, Chair of the Department of History
Mark Wardell, Dean of the Toulouse Graduate School

This study seeks to understand the development of early American ideas of race, religion, and gender as reflected in Indian and Barbary captivity narratives (tales of individuals taken captive by privateers in North Africa) and in plays that take American captives as their subject. Writers of both Indian and Barbary captivity narratives used racial and religious language – references to Indians and North Africans as demonic, physically monstrous, and animal – simultaneously to delineate Native American and North African otherness. The narrative writers reserved particular scorn for the figure of the Renegade – the willful cultural convert who chose to live among the Native Americans or adopt Islam and live among his North African captors. The narratives, too, reflect Early American gendered norms by defining the role of men as heads of household and women's protectors, and by defining women by their status as dutiful wives and mothers. Furthermore, the narratives carefully treat the figure of the female captive with particular care – resisting implications of captive rape, even while describing graphic scenes of physical torture, and denying the possibility of willful transcultural sexual relationships.
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INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to understand the development of early American ideas of race, religion, and gender as reflected in captivity narratives. The work presented here extends earlier studies that limited their analysis of captivity narratives thematically or geographically by assessing only race or religion while using only Indian or Barbary captivity narratives, not both. This study differs from past analyses in another important respect. Using the theoretical lens of ethnogenesis – the process by which a nation or people builds a common identity through a “complex of myths and symbols, with its attendant set of life-style images and narratives” – this study considers captivity narratives within an overarching theoretical framework. Broadly speaking, ethnogenesis is an intellectual framework largely contained within the realms of sociology, archaeology, and anthropology. Scholars within these disciplines use the concept to categorize the development of in-group cohesion, often in the face of multifarious, competing ethnic identities within a given geographical location.

Ethnogenesis as an analytical tool is appropriate to the study of captivity narratives as the individuals involved directly in captivity - as well as those who were writing narratives of captivity (not often the same people) - had to grapple with what it meant to be an American in a turbulent world where the exercise of power over mind and body was not limited to one nation, race, or religion.


2 See for example, James Sidbury and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, "Mapping Ethnogenesis in the Early Modern Atlantic," William and Mary Quarterly 68, no. 2 (2011): 181-208. In this article, the authors address ethnogenesis as it relates to creolization and the multi-cultural environment of the Americas induced by the trans-Atlantic slave trade.
Properly understanding captivity narratives and the process of ethnogenesis in the new American republic requires situating the phenomenon of captivity and its attendant narratives in a truly global context. In order to do this, this study looks at both Indian and Barbary captivity narratives. Scholars in the past have largely limited themselves to only one of these subsets of the captivity genre. This study maintains that by limiting one’s analysis only to Indian or Barbary captivity narratives is to miss half the story. Constructing a dialogue between both kinds of captivity narratives in a trans-Atlantic fashion also allows for a deeper understanding of the processes of othering at work in a wider variety of the genre’s manifestations. Furthermore, looking at Indian and Barbary captivity narratives, together, allows for a deeper appreciation of captivity narratives as tools of ethnogenesis.

The scholarly approach, traditionally, has viewed ethnogenesis as a process of inclusion – whereby articulations of proper dress and comportment, virtuous values, appropriate religious beliefs, etc., delineate who belongs within a given community. Reading for ethnogenesis in captivity narratives requires a subversion of this mode of thinking. Individuals, taken in captivity, who wrote or dictated their own narratives, and writers, who wrote works in the captivity genre, largely built their understanding of Americanness through narratives of exclusion – by defining and denigrating what they found to be different in the captors’ “otherness.” A definite sense of what was American, by virtue of what was not American, coalesced around this scaffolding of difference. The importance of articulating a valorized, set-apart Americanness mattered, particularly given the tenuous position of the United States

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3 Indian captivity narratives, as the name suggests, concern the capture of frontier settlers by Indian tribes. Barbary captivity narratives involve the capture, at sea, of Americans by privateers working out of the Barbary states of North Africa – Tunis, Tripoli, Morocco, and Algiers.
within a highly competitive, multifarious global power structure. Americans feared, often with just cause, that they would lose their identity, particularly as a result of the captivity experience. The fear of transculturation – of losing or even transforming one’s identity and allegiances – was hardly an abstraction in the early years of the American republic. A number of individuals taken captive both by Indians and by North African privateers never returned to their original homes and essentially either became Indian or Muslim – sometimes even by choice. Thus, the need to articulate a superior Americanness occurred as a reaction to the dangerous mutability of identity suggested by moments of transculturation.

The phenomenon of the American captivity narrative began with what most scholars consider the genre’s ur-text, Mary Rolwandson’s *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, first published in Massachusetts in 1682. Following Rowlandson’s work, hundreds of authors took pen to paper to write their own captivity narratives or to write second-hand, third-hand, or even completely fabricated accounts using the generic boundaries established by Rowlandson. In the past, scholars devoted a great deal of attention to determining if the narratives were entirely factual, embellished in some respects, or wholly fictional. For the purposes of this study, which seeks to understand the epistemological processes at work in constructed narratives, the historical accuracy of any given narrative is largely beside the point. What matters instead, is the way the author characterized the nature of captivity, and the characteristics of the captors.

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4 Mary White Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God, Together, with the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed; Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson. Commended by Her, to All That Desires to Know the Lords Doings to, and Dealings with Her. Especially to Her Dear Children and Relations, Written by Her Own Hand for Her Private Use, and Now Made Publick at the Earnest Desire of Some Friends, and for the Benefit of the Afflicted.* (Cambridge, MA: Samuel Green, 1682).
Rowlandson’s *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, gave birth to a genre that endured for centuries. Indian captivity narratives that hewed closely to the model set by Rowlandson’s narrative remained popular well into the mid-nineteenth century. The capture of Americans by Barbary privateers was a less historically enduring problem and consequently fewer Barbary captivity narratives exist.\(^5\) Within this work, the corpus of primary sources is further refined by a clearly demarcated chronological window of analysis. This study appreciates literary artifacts as important historical sources. Appropriately, the years bookending this study – 1776 and 1823 – too, present important signposts in American literary history, defined as they are by the Declaration of Independence and the Monroe Doctrine, respectively. Both documents mark crucial turning points in the development of an American sense of self, with the Declaration marking a clear political break from Britain and the Monroe Doctrine marking an internationally self-confident nation able, to a considerable degree, to project its power internationally and make broad policy statements to other powers.

The structure of this work reflects the fact that structures of otherness operated across multiple axes in captivity narratives. The first chapter lays the foundation for the rest of the study, assessing the historiography of captivity narratives beginning with Phillips D. Carleton’s work in 1943 on Indian captivities, through to 21st century understandings of Barbary captivity. The chapter then turns to make the case that captivity narratives should be viewed as part of

an American process of ethnogenesis whereby articulations of difference and exclusion within the narratives created a scaffolding of difference upon which writers built a valorized Americanness. The chapter traces the use of ethnogenesis, briefly, in sociological and historical writing and explains why ethnogenesis as articulated in these works makes sense in the current analysis. Understanding the connection between ethnogenesis and the captivity narrative is important, as it grounds much of the later analysis of captivity narratives and their work to structure appropriate racial, religious, and gendered conceptions of Americanness.

Scholars of captivity narratives differ in their opinions regarding whether fears of transculturation revolve around questions of racial or religious identity. Chapter Two of this work, demonstrates that authors of captivity narratives structured Native American and North African difference using intricate language that implicates both religious and racial difference. Specifically, the narratives use demonic, monstrous, and animal imagery to dehumanize the North African or Native American other. The chapter closes by considering the figure of the renegade – an individual who gives up his or her original, Western identity and adopts the cultural or religious identity of the North African or Native American other. Authors of captivity narratives were careful to police boundaries of identity by controlling the potentially disruptive figure of the renegade by denigrating, in the strongest terms, the renegade and his or her decision to cross cultural boundaries.

The condition of captivity necessarily brings up uncomfortable questions about gender and power in a patriarchal system. How can one be a man if he cannot save himself or his women from captivity? What does it mean to be a woman in captivity? Chapter Three shows how captivity narratives valorized certain gender roles, specifically those portraying men as
brave protectors, and women as dutiful wives and patient sufferers. Furthermore, this chapter explores the narratives’ struggle with the figure of the captive woman. Ultimately, the narratives, reflecting contemporary fears of sexual contact across cultures, foreclosed the possibility of transcultural relations either by defining captive women as virgins until death, or by an accommodating plot in which the female protagonists resists willful cultural conversion and the expected sexual contact that such renegadism would entail.

The fourth and final chapter applies ways of reading captivity narratives developed earlier in the study — emphasizing racial, religious, and gendered ways of understanding difference — to an analysis of three early American plays which take as their subject Barbary captivity. Like the traditional narratives, the plays similarly resist the possibility of true transculturation. This chapter also raises themes that are particular to these plays. First, two of the plays discussed within this chapter are known to have been written by women. Within these works, the playwrights construct female characters whose limited ambit of agency is compelling because it mirrors the limited scope of action available to the new American nation, specifically as it attempted to construct a coherent foreign policy regarding the Barbary States of North Africa. Second, the plays within this chapter have a peculiar way of looking at the North African other that differs from the standard other-as-savage motif found throughout the more traditional captivity narratives. The difference here, is that although the North African context is undoubtedly structured as different and inferior, there is an element of didactic democratization — an understanding that it is only through contact with American characters that North Africans will ever learn to be proper republicans and discard the shroud of tyrannical and ignorant dictatorship.
Analyzing works of popular culture such as plays extends the traditional canon of captivity narratives and has another added benefit. As overt works of art meant to entertain (and not necessarily to challenge) their contemporary audiences, the works may provide a better mirror into early American ideas regarding race, religion, gender, and belonging in the early Republic. Furthermore, the plays, unlike their more traditional narrative counterparts, allow for the refraction of themes across several characters, allowing the playwright to explore meaning in a more manifold sense than within the constraints of a traditional first or third person narrative.

Historians are often reticent to give due credit to literary works – particularly works of fiction – as authentic historical artifacts. Part of this reticence is due to the competing languages of analysis that surround the historical study of literature. This work attempts to hew closer to the historian’s understanding of textual analysis, and for this reason does not focus to a great extent on the kind of theoretical questions literary scholars prefer to analyze in works that they fashion for their own disciplinal audiences. Still, even if historians and literary scholars often talk at cross-purposes, the fact remains that literary artifacts provide incredibly fertile ground in which to explore and unpack early American conceptions of belonging and not belonging. Perhaps to a greater degree than diplomatic correspondence, tax or census records, or numismatics, it is through works of literature that the voice of an era emerges. The difficulty arises in interpreting that voice without diluting the contemporary meaning with modern-day presentism. I hope this work rises to that challenge.
THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF CAPTIVITY AND THE RELEVANCE OF ETHNOGENESIS

The Historiography of the Indian Captivity Narrative

The Native American practice of taking captives during war time actually predates first contact and the period of European colonization in North America. As Christina Snyder explains in her work delineating Indian modes of captivity and slavery, the taking of captives was a method for chiefs of a particular region to “demonstrate their mastery over foreign places and external forces.”¹ Mastery over the lives and destinies of captured humans mattered as much in Native American warfare as mastery over a discrete geographical region. Ultimately, Indian warfare before and after the arrival of the Europeans centered around control of resources. Within this framework the control of people, as a resource, mattered.² Indian captors made use of their captives in a number of specific ways – as individuals ransomed for money, replacement for dead family members, or to expiate the souls of their dead tribesmen lost in war.

The captivity narratives, of course, focus on the most horrific aspects of Native American torture and murder of captives. Snyder’s work suggests that the torture of captives, involving as it did a very elaborate ritual, was a religious practice designed to pacify the spirits of those members of one’s own tribe lost in battle. Snyder connects this practice to the idea of blood vengeance, a legal and religious concept found in many traditional societies, where the soul of the lost individual demanded the blood of the captive for spiritual appeasement.³

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¹ Christina Snyder, Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 35.
² See for example, June Namias, White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).
³ See Snyder, 80-100.
killing the captive through an elaborate ritual, grieving Native Americans avenged the death of their tribesman and assured his peaceful transit to the next plane of existence.

Apart from their sacrificial use in blood vengeance rituals, captives had other important uses. Linda Colley, speaking specifically about the Colonial era that precedes the era considered in this study, mentions the role of captives both as hostages and slaves. Indians held captives—in a manner very similar to their North African counterparts—until such time as the captives were paid for by their own governments, or failing that, were sold to other nearby colonial powers. Other captives served as slaves for their new Indian master, or far more often, the Indians adopted them as members of the tribe. Indeed, as horrific as the thought of torture and execution was to the contemporary reader of captivity narratives, the thought of losing one’s own culture and becoming an Indian was perhaps only the second most feared outcome of captivity.4

Tales of captivity in the North American context emerged in the late seventeenth century. Published in 1682, Mary Rowlandson’s narrative, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, represents the ur-text of the captivity genre.5 For more than three centuries stories of captivity captivated the early American reading public. It was not until the twentieth century that literary scholars and historians began to give sustained academic attention to stories of

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5 Mary White Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God, Together, with the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed; Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson. Commended by Her, to All That Desires to Know the Lords Doings to, and Dealings with Her. Especially to Her Dear Children and Relations, Written by Her Own Hand for Her Private Use, and Now Made Publick at the Earnest Desire of Some Friends, and for the Benefit of the Afflicted.* (Cambridge, MA: Samuel Green, 1682).
Indian captivity. Scholarly attention to Barbary Captivity narratives represents an outgrowth of previous interest in Indian captivity tales and a larger academic curiosity toward colonial and early American ties to the Muslim world. To understand this latter development, it is first necessary to understand the process by which a corpus of scholarship emerged regarding the Indian captivity narrative.

In 1911, Edward E. Ayer bequeathed to the Newberry Library a vast collection of Native American artifacts which included numerous captivity narratives. With the 1937 publication of Ruth Latham Butler’s *A Checklist of Manuscripts in the Edward E. Ayer Collection*, scholars had a ready reference to help them navigate the documents in the archive. Codification of Ayer’s archive spurred academic interest in captivity as a genre while at the same time encouraging the search for forgotten captivity narratives. At this time, scholarly attention focused solely on Indian captivity narratives. It would not be until the end of the twentieth century that Barbary captivity narratives received sustained attention from scholars of American history and literature.

Historical treatment of Indian captivity narratives can be broken into two significant periods, defined by the publication of Richard Slotkin’s *Regeneration Through Violence*, in 1973. Prior to Slotkin’s study, most works analyzed the contours and characteristics of the genre, accepted most narratives as useful only as historical source material not as intellectual history, and largely failed to connect the narratives to wider questions of race, gender, and belonging in the Colonial and early American eras. After Slotkin, scholars were much more willing to engage these questions. This turn toward questions of identity makes sense, and was part and parcel

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of the post 1960s deconstructive and literary turns in the Academy in general, and in historical scholarship specifically. It is worth reviewing, in some detail, the contributions of past scholars to better understand the context of the present analysis. The following historiographical review does not pretend to be exhaustive, but does hit on those works of particular importance in the development of the historical understanding of Indian captivity.

Important scholarly efforts in the pre-Slotkin era include works by Phillips D. Carleton, R.W.G. Vail, Roy Harvey Peace, and Richard VanDerBeets. Beginning with Phillips D. Carleton’s essay entitled “Indian Captivity” published in American Literature in 1943, scholars of this era traced the contours of the genre, classifying the nature of the narratives and their evolution through time. 7 Carleton’s essay compares the tales of Indian captivity on the American frontier to Icelandic sagas and finds that both forms of literature “cover the periods of...settlement in new lands and the violence that attended that settlement.” 8 For Carleton the intrinsic appeal of the captivity narrative lies in its usefulness as a truthful historical source. Yet even as he explains how the ostensible truthfulness of these narratives limited their appeal as subjects of literary merit, he does concede that to their contemporary audiences, these works “took the place of fiction, of what might be called escape literature now.” 9 In many ways, Carleton’s analysis reads more like a kind of qualified academic boosterism, as he valorizes the genre without much of a critique, and fails to evince much skepticism in the reliability of the narratives as appropriate historical source material.

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8 Ibid., 169.
9 Ibid., 170.
Much of the effort by Carleton and his contemporaries involved mining the archives for captivity narratives and building a working bibliography for future use. R.W.G. Vail’s work in this vein proved particularly important. In the 1940s Vail published two important works on the Indian captivity narrative: the first an article, the second a lecture given as part of the A.S.W. Rosenbach Fellowship in Bibliography at the University of Pennsylvania. As the name of this fellowship suggests, appended to Vail’s lectures on early American literature was an expansive bibliography providing information on numerous captivity narratives as well as other important early American literary sources. This catalog of sources remains an immensely useful resource for historians.

In his earlier work Vail, like other contemporary scholars, finds the narratives important as primary historical sources, but also finds them fascinating for the civilizational clash between civilized Europe and the “stone age” culture of the Native Americans which the tales portray, and for their intrinsic merit as thrilling stories. Vail’s article is largely a chronological bibliography, tracing the development of the genre from Rowlandson, focusing on the particular role played by Cotton Mather in bringing together a number of narratives in order to illustrate God’s ultimate deliverance of the believer. He mentions, only in passing, the fact of transculturation, finding that “one strange feature of this captivity business is the surprisingly large number of persons who refused to return to their old homes when they had the chance.” Apart from this aside, Vail’s work does not engage with captivity narratives as

12 Vail, "Certain Indian Captives of New England," 117.
cultural artifacts. Instead his work catalogs examples of the genre in a chronological fashion, and gives the historian the important information (especially before the advent of digital collections) of where the captivity narratives can be found. The latter article largely retraces Vail’s original contention, although it does expand the geographic understanding of Indian captivity to include captives’ tales from Texas, Brazil, Mexico, and Florida.

Roy Harvey Pearce is the first of the early scholars to question the validity of the history in captivity narratives, finding especially that narratives produced in the latter half of the eighteenth century and toward the nineteenth were particularly prone to being historically inaccurate or entirely fabricated.\(^\text{13}\) Largely though, Pearce’s work provides a taxonomy of different types of genre – a catalogue that generally proceeds chronologically. Pearce begins with the Puritan narratives in which he finds “the details of captivity itself are found to figure forth a larger, essentially religious experience.”\(^\text{14}\) By the end of the seventeenth and toward the beginning of the eighteenth century, captivity narratives transformed from the traditional Puritan narratives of captivity as religious trial, to narrative that reflected contemporary power politics – particularly settler concerns that the French were instigating the Indians on the frontier. In Pearce’s analysis the point of these narratives, “was to register as much hatred of the French and Indians as possible.”\(^\text{15}\)

Given his explication of the French and Indian background, it is surprising that Pearce does not explain that during the Revolutionary period, writers of captivity narratives replaced the French villains with the British as the primary instigators of Indian aggression. Pearce


\(^\text{14}\) Ibid., 2.

\(^\text{15}\) Ibid., 6.
ignores the Revolutionary rhetoric of the narratives and instead suggests that after the Seven Years’ War, from the 1760s through the 1780s, works of Indian captivity narrative transformed into overtly sensational pieces, in which expansive, gory passages of text detail horrific methods Indians were said to employ to torture or murder their captives. Finally, Pearce suggests the narrative shifted toward the sentimental and emotionally melodramatic. Pearce essentially ends without tracing the development of the narrative through the nineteenth century, finding that latter narratives “simply define and redefine captivity as we have seen it produced in the 1780s and 1790s.”

Richard VanDerBeets’s scholarly contribution to the study of Indian captivity narratives straddled the publication of Slotkin’s *Regeneration Through Violence*, with an article published before Slotkin, and a short monograph published after Slotkin’s work. However, even conceding this fact, VanDerBeets’s work aligns more closely with earlier scholarship, although VanDerBeets does come closest among the earlier scholars to understanding the genre in almost mythological terms – a process that Slotkin would complete.

VanDerBeets also differs from earlier scholars by approaching Indian captivity tales not as a collection of types, but as a cohesive genre that transformed over time. In his article, he connects the narrative to an analysis of Native American practices related to warfare and captive taking. VanDerBeets understands the captivity narrative as essentially a myth of the captive’s death, trial by immersion in a foreign culture, and righteous, purified rebirth to his or

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16 Ibid., 16.
her home culture. The moment of captivity occurred in an instant, but the process of transformation and immersion took longer. The process often began by running the gauntlet immediately after captivity, and by growing more and more accustomed to Indian customs that had initially repulsed the captive. The process of transformation and adoption ended when the captive took the language of his or her captors. This happened most often in the cases of captives taken when they were very young and who spent many years in captivity.\textsuperscript{19}

VanDerBeets extends his analysis in his monograph on the Indian captivity narrative. Here he essentially devotes a chapter of analysis to each part of Pearce’s typology – Puritan narrative, French and Indian propaganda, sensationalist work, and sentimental melodrama. Quizically, apart from a short mention in the acknowledgements, VanDerBeets does not mention or reference Pearce in the text or notes in his work. Still, VanDerBeets covers important ground, even if he does not credit Pearce for the structure of the work. Considering the Puritan Indian captivity narrative, VanDerBeets explains that Puritans viewed their world through a lens of clearly demarcated good and evil. In this harsh dichotomy they considered the natives of the wilderness to be under the direction of Satan and the French Catholics to be their equally culpable allies.\textsuperscript{20}

Regarding the narrative as propaganda during the Seven Years’ War, VanDerBeets places the narratives in the context of simmering frontier warfare that had been taking place as early as 1689.\textsuperscript{21} Unlike Pearce, VanDerBeets extends his analysis of captivity narratives in times of war to include the Revolutionary Era, where the British replaced the French as enemies and

\textsuperscript{19} VanDerBeets, "The Indian Captivity Narrative as Ritual," 558-559.

\textsuperscript{20} VanDerBeets, \textit{The Indian Captivity Narrative: An American Genre}, 1.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 14.
instigators of Indian aggression. VanDerBeets suggests, in fact, that the dynamic is so similar in
the narratives, that one could even consider renaming this war the “British and Indian War”
from the perspective of frontier settlers. As with the French in the earlier war, in this case too,
“Indian allies became the focus for sentiment against their military masters.”22 After the
Revolution the narratives dropped their focus on the British and instead refocused on the evils
of the native savage “foreshadow[ing] the full blooming of nineteenth century Manifest Destiny
and the irresistible force of American nationalism.”23

Carleton and his contemporaries shied away from exploring the deeper significations of
Indian captivity tales, and instead focused on the narratives as a legitimate historical source.
Although we can see the extension of analysis into the symbolic in the works of Pearce and Vail,
early works on the Indian captivity narrative still attempted to place the genre either in relation
to other works of American literature or to distinguish categories within the genre itself. With
Richard Slotkin’s analysis of the Indian captivity narrative in his work Regeneration Through
Violence: the Mythology of the American Frontier, the historiographical focus on the captivity
narratives shifted from one of taxonomic characterization to one of mining the meaning found
within the narratives and their pertinence to the settlement of the frontier by Euro-
Americans.24

Slotkin focuses on the earliest of the Puritan captivity narratives and finds that in all
areas the captivity narrative responded to Puritan’s psychologically deep-seated fears of the

22 Ibid., 19.
23 Ibid.
24 Richard Slotkin, Regeneration through Violence the Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860 (Norman:
dition of the work.
wilderness and its temptation toward barbarity. Slotkin sees captivity as one of the foundational myths of Puritan existence, suggesting: “Almost from the moment of its literary genesis, the New England captivity narrative functioned as a myth, reducing the Puritan state of mind and world view, along with the events of colonization and settlement into archetypical drama”.\(^{25}\) The captivity narrative reflected Puritan fears that their venture into the wilderness and away from England might have been a mistake – indeed, a spiritual mistake. Furthermore, the narratives clearly portray the Puritan dichotomy of what was good and what was evil – with the Indians always representing the demonic unknown beyond the forest. Additionally, the structure of the narrative reflected Puritan concerns about their state of election. Individuals constantly looked for outward signs that God had designated them for salvation. Works could not save you, but these outward signs of deliverance served as leading indicators of salvation.

Slotkin also considers questions of race and the fear of miscegenation in the narratives, pointing to Mercy Short’s description of the Devil in Salem that she gives to Cotton Mather. She describes the devil in terms that mix important racial and cultural markers, creating essentially a mixed-breed demon that embodied all of the Puritans’ deepest psychological worries. The Devil, as he appeared to Ms. Short, “A divel having the figure of a short and a black man...he was a wretch no taller than an ordinary walking-staff, he was not of a Negro, but of tawney or Indian colour; he wore a high-crowned hat, with straight hair; and had one cloven-foot”.\(^{26}\) According to Slotkin, the Puritans conflated the demonic with the detestable, connecting fears of miscegenation to fears of a literal devil stalking the woods. Slotkin’s work marks a turning

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\(^{25}\) Ibid., 94.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 132.
point in the historiography of subsequent works on Indian captivity, and his willingness to probe the underlying meaning of the narratives to the psyche of a people informs numerous subsequent studies, including this one.

After Slotkin, scholars were much more willing to delve deeper into the meanings contained in the narratives. This is due both to Slotkin’s own groundbreaking literary analysis and the development in the academy of a more robust toolkit of literary and historical analysis – one that invoked discourse theory, feminisms, an understanding of the interplay of race and power in the American context, and an overall skepticism regarding the traditional narratives of American history.

Apart from the publication of a few relatively insignificant captivity narratives (mostly reprints of those already available), a handful of doctoral dissertations,27 VanDerBeets’ *The Indian Captivity Narrative* (discussed earlier), and Alden T. Vaughan’s *Narratives of North American Indian Captivity: A Selective Bibliography*,28 the 1980s were quiet years for the study of the Indian captivity narrative. In fact, it was not until the 1990s that any further, meaningful, scholarly additions to the historiography of the Indian captivity narrative occurred. The decade saw a number of scholars across disciplines grapple with the significances of the genre specifically to ideas of identity formation, gender, race, and processes of othering.

Historians and students of early American literature approached the Indian captivity narrative from a variety of angles in the 1990s. Greg Sieminski’s study at the start of the decade

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specifically relates the captivity narrative to the politics and rhetoric surrounding the American Revolution. Sieminski suggests the popularity of the captivity narrative as a genre in this period is due to the general conception among the colonists that they were suffering their own form of captivity, “as captives of a tyrant rather than as subjects of a king”. This captivity was not simply metaphorical. Sieminski points to the very real captivity suffered by the general population of colonists under British military occupation, and by a not insignificant number of prisoners taken as rebels by the same military forces. Sieminski does not trace the development of an early American ethnogenesis, but his work is important in reading the Indian captivity narrative in a way that appreciated the othering of the Indians, and in the case of Ethan Allen’s narrative, the British. To Sieminski, these narratives “defined the nascent republic in terms of what it had rejected rather than what it had become,” a process of othering by exclusion that I extend to my analysis below. The Puritan captivity narrative as a metaphorical journey, Sieminski stresses, was so appealing to Revolutionary era Americans because the entire story of the Revolution, in Sieminski’s model, represents one large process of redemption from British tyranny – from being captive to British whims.

After Sieminski, the decade saw the publication of a number of important monographs. Kathryn Derounian-Stodola and James Levernier explore the Indian captivity narrative in a chronologically expansive study that traces the genre from the earliest narratives through to

30 Ibid., 36.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 45.
the beginning of the twentieth century. The authors apply to the works both Freudian and feminist theory. Using Freud’s interpretive schema, the authors find that the Indian captivity narrative is “an essentially male form of fantasy literature reflecting the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) American male’s subconscious ambivalence when confronted with the wilderness”. Contemporary male readers, according to the authors’ analysis, feared what the Native American male represented within the narratives, seeing in them a more authentic, closer-to-nature masculinity, yet simultaneously rejecting the Indian as racially and culturally inferior, and as a sexual threat to passive, female captives. Furthermore, the authors find that the narratives reveal a bipolar understanding of Native Americans as both potentially “good” and “bad.” The simple duality of good vs. bad Indian provided a psychological palliative to the white settler population making policies of segregation and extermination seem the logical outcomes of this fictional duality.

The authors divide white women’s experience in the narratives into five overlapping categories: as victims/virgins, mothers/daughters/sisters, traumatized women, and transculturated women. The narratives describe the terror women felt at having their homes attacked, their family members killed, and having to endure captivity among an essentially alien people. Derounian-Stodola and Levernier describe the limits of victimization in the narratives, finding that women captives deflected questions of their own sexual purity and sanctity by emphasizing sexual attacks against other women and their own miraculous protection from such violence. The authors mention, too, the propagandistic use of the specter of rape, but do

34 Ibid., 43.
not address the transcultural fears of miscegenation underlying women’s denial of sexual compromise.

Christopher Castiglia’s work extends the metaphor of the captivity narrative beyond the traditional Puritan and early American sources, considering even the case of Patty Hearst as a kind of captivity. Castiglia offers a different explanation for the genre’s enduring appeal, reading the narratives with their female readers in mind. He suggests that women readers would have had an ambivalent relationship to the captivity texts. On the one hand, “white women, by generating fear and hatred for the Indians and their allies, helped to further the colonization of the shifting western frontiers,” even as the narratives “offered American women a female picaresque, an adventure story set, unlike most early American women’s literature, outside the home”.

Like Castiglia, Michelle Burnham approaches the Indian captivity narrative not from the perspective of a historian, strictly speaking, but instead uses the analytical tools of literary scholar to plumb the genre’s meanings. Burnham ties the Indian captivity narrative to sentimentality and sentimental literature, a literary mood contemporary to the narratives themselves. Sentimental writing, instead of being a specific genre, is more of a catch-all category for different forms of writing that emphasized emotion in a way that modern readers would find largely melodramatic. Sentimentality, as a theme in literature, was popular from the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century. Burnham argues that it is through the

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36 Ibid., 4-5.

emotional ties fostered by sentimentality that readers not on the frontier would have read captivity narratives and felt a sense of connection to the narratives’ characters. Thus it is the ties of emotion that allow readers in London, for example, to feel a connection to the captivity of Mary Rowlandson in the North American wilderness. Burnham also contends narratives of the early American period, connected readers to the concept of Republican Motherhood – a hallmark of early American rhetoric in which the health of the nation depended on women’s role in raising and educating the nation’s youth. Within the narratives Burnham suggests Revolutionary Era readers identified with the captive woman, and metaphorically structured Great Britain as a distant, uncaring mother who has spurned her colonial children in a misguided pursuit of wealth and imperial aggrandizement.38

Burnham’s work is suggestive in connecting the narratives to the concept of Republican Motherhood yet she does not interrogate the role of the captivity narrative in active processes of identity formation in early America. Burnham also connects the figure of the prone female captive to the frailty of the new nation in the wider world, but does not specifically speak to fears of transculturation and miscegenation. Interestingly, if somewhat problematically, Burnham assesses the narratives using frameworks that would not have been available to contemporary readers applying to the narratives both Freudian and Marxist analyses.

Unlike Michelle Burnham, the work of Rebecca Blevins Faery specifically connects race, sex, and national identity in the context of the early Indian captivity narratives. Her work, which also approaches the Indian captivity narratives from the disciplinary angle of literary studies,

38 Ibid., 70.
considers what she calls the “cartographies of desire” within the narratives. As she states in the introduction to her work:

My title, *Cartographies of Desire*, reflects my conviction that stories about white women’s captivities and welcoming Indian maidens have repeatedly helped to construct the map of the United States, both geographic and ideological, of contested territory as well as of the ideologies of race and sex that have informed the evolution of an American nation on this continent.  

Faery, explicitly connects the rhetoric surrounding the Indian captivity narrative to constructions of gender and race that would influence the development of racial and sexual boundaries in the early Republic. More challenging and ambitious is Faery’s attempt to give voice to what she terms the “Pocahontas figure” – the accommodating Indian woman who welcomed European male explorers. Faery’s work is an interesting one, as it blends scholarly memoir with historical analysis, while tracing the importance of the captivity narratives and the Pocahontas figure to contemporary Native American experience. For the purposes of this essay, Faery builds on other scholars’ understanding of the captivity narrative as fundamentally double-voiced, reflecting the concerns of the initial, female captive (such as Rowlandson, whose narrative she spends an entire chapter dissecting) and the editorial voice of male patriarchy represented by ministers who co-opted the female narrative for their own religious and ideological purposes. Faery finds that the captivity narrative arose at the same time that racial prejudices concretized in the colonial era. She suggests that, while, European colonial attitudes toward individuals of African descent always held that they were immutably racially different, the same did not hold true for Native Americans. Faery’s work does not explore how racial constructions within the captivity narratives themselves added to the discourse on race in

the colonial era. Instead she focuses more on the meanings of the captive Puritan female, and the receptive Indian woman, to the project of colonization and westward expansion.

In addition to the academic monographs discussed above, the 1990s also saw the publication of a number of important scholarly articles tackling the subject of the Indian captivity narrative. Significantly, none of these articles address captivity narratives in the early National period, and most have as their main subject Mary Rowlandson’s narrative. Works on Rowlandson’s narrative in the 1990s include Tara Fitzpatrick’s explanation of the dual-voiced nature of Rowlandson’s narrative.40 Fitzpatrick’s main theme in this article is the dual purposes made of the returning woman captive’s narrative – as both an authentic narrative telling the story of a woman’s survival among an alien culture in the wilderness, as well as a story molded to the purposes of the Puritan ecclesiastical elite, demonstrating both God’s ultimate deliverance of the elect by virtue of His grace alone, and the danger of straying too far from the Puritan community into the wild frontier.

Teresa Toulouse also reads Rowlandson’s narrative closely, looking specifically for reference to credit within the narrative.41 Toulouse finds that what Rowlandson desired by writing her account is “precisely that her tale be credited and that in being so credited her own credit – worth, value, on multiple grounds – be restored”.42 Toulouse further ties the concept of credit-seeking to issues of gender and the limited social agency afforded to Puritan women, and suggests that Rowlandson uses three main rhetorical strategies to make the most of her

41 Teresa Toulouse, "'My Own Credit': Strategies of (E)Valuation in Mary Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative," American Literature 64, no. 4 (1992): 655-676.
42 Ibid., 656.
narrative’s authority: “discourses of status, of martyrdom, and of providence [in the form of readable signs of God’s grace and forbearance].”  

Still, Rowlandson’s rhetorical search for credit from her readership is not without internal contradictions. Even within the tripartite strategy of gaining credit Toulouse explicates, Rowlandson questions her ability to piously suffer her fate with a clear faith in God’s ultimate providence. For Toulouse, “the more mechanically Rowlandson acknowledges her submissiveness in orthodox terms, the more she complicates the range of explanation offered to her by such orthodoxy.” In the final analysis Toulouse provides another interesting reading of Rowlandson’s narrative, but does not specifically address the kinds of questions this study explores: namely the connection between race, gender, and early American identity as it was structured in the early national period.

Like Toulouse and Fitzpatrick, Margaret Davis also looks to Rowlandson for inspiration. Her study, squarely addresses the problem posed in Rowlandson’s text of a willful, woman protagonist. As she suggests, the Puritan orthodoxy looked askance at women who took the pen of their own accord, fearing as Cotton Mather did that a woman “might not without Sin, lead the Life which old Stories ascribe to Amazons.” Davis thus finds that, in order not be adjudged as Amazons, Puritan women – in this case Mary Rowlandson – had to deploy a rhetoric of self-sanctification in order assure that their work was taken seriously. Essentially, because Rowlandson did not wish to challenge the existing patriarchal hierarchy and the limited

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43 Ibid., 667.
44 Ibid., 669.
ambit it provided to women’s self-expression, she established herself as the “Puritan goodwife in relation to all masculine authority figures, including God the Father.” Additionally Rowlandson, “marks a fine equilibration between conventionality and independence, between disempowerment and powerment that particularizes the precarious place of discerning women in seventeenth-century New England.” Her work “illustrates the subtle exchange between self-effacement and self-assertion required when a writing female desires to enter the zone of publicity and remain acceptable.”

Michelle Burnham, before publishing her monograph on captivity and sentiment, wrote an article discussing narrative tone within Rowlandson’s text. Here Burnham is concerned with “the curious split in the narrative tone of Rowlandson’s narrative” between the passages where she discusses the particulars of her journey into the wilderness with the Indians and those passages where she cites biblical texts pertinent to her situation. Burnham does not attribute this dichotomy to Rowlandson’s psychological state, or to her mimicking the style of sermon literature, but rather to “her altered cultural subjectivity, an alteration produced by the extent and duration of contact with her Algonquian captors.” Further, Burnham connects this “dialogism” to the emergence of the novel as a literary form. While it is not the main thrust of Burnham’s argument, her essay does explore Rowlandson’s othering of her Indian captives. Burnham finds that while Rowlandson continued to categorize Indian custom as strange, savage, and ultimately heathen, “her symbolic awareness of the Indians began to be coupled

46 This and preceding quotations from ibid., 50.
48 Ibid.
with the detailed observations which were necessary to her survival, and which consequently altered her subjectivity, within this strange culture." 49 Burnham’s study suggests the kind of processes at work in the narrative, where the intimacy of captivity had to be contained, and the otherness of Indian culture maintained.

Finally, Lisa Logan’s article on Mary Rowlandson’s text discusses the woman as subject within the narrative. 50 Logan’s reading of Rowlandson’s narrative focuses on metaphors of place within the text. For Logan, “Rowlandson’s text is an inquiry into the position(s) of woman as subject in/of/to discourse; and ‘captivity’ is both the occasion for her writing and a telling metaphor for her position.” Furthermore, she suggests that captivity within the narrative as a whole “operates as a metaphor to reveal the position(s) [Rowlandson] inhabits as a woman author and a gendered and political subject.” 51 Rowlandson is most concerned with returning home, and Logan reads the text as a longing for, and justification of Rowlandson’s return: “The title page, preface, appended sermon written by her husband, and the narrative itself all function to restore Rowlandson’s position among her ‘Christian Friends.’” 52

The remaining important article-length studies of the 1990s also focus on earlier Indian captivity narratives, but do not focus exclusively on Mary Rowlandson’s captivity. Lorrayne Carroll examines Hannah Swarton’s captivity narrative, paying close attention, like Tara Fitzpatrick, to the dueling voices of the female captive and the male clerical elite. Carroll uses

49 Ibid., 70.
51 All ibid., 256.
52 Ibid., 258.
the narrative of Hannah Swarton to argue for the inherent ambivalence with which Puritan society understood and handled female agency.\textsuperscript{53}

Hillary Wyss’s study of developing ideas of race in the early captivity narratives marks a refreshing departure from studies focusing entirely on Mary Rowlandson, the relationship between Puritanical religious belief and patriarchy of the earliest captivity narratives. Wyss analyzes the personal stories from nineteenth century captivity tales to problematize ideas of race and belonging. Wyss approaches questions of identity through a reading of the captivities of William Apess and Mary Jemison. Apess was born a Pequot Indian and adopted by a white, Methodist family. Mary Jemison’s story is equally unusual. Taken from her Irish parents as a youth by the Seneca Indians, Jemison experienced adoption into Indian culture and gave birth to children considered ethnically Seneca.\textsuperscript{54} According to Wyss, the Apess and Jemison narratives emerged at a time when “the very idea of racial and cultural mixture was a source of enormous political tension,” and “racial categories were reconceptualized...as an increasingly ‘scientific’ approach replaced more mutable climate theories” on race.\textsuperscript{55} To Wyss, Apess and Jemison challenged the incipient, growing rigidity of racial difference.

No discussion of the historiography of the captivity narrative in the 1990s is complete without addressing John Demos’s important work, \textit{The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America}. Demos’s work focuses on the 1703 Indian raid against Deerfield,


\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 64.
Massachusetts and the subsequent captivity of John Williams, a prominent Puritan minister, and most of his family.⁵⁶

Williams and all except one of his children taken into captivity returned to their original lives in Massachusetts as a result of formal and informal diplomatic processes working to assure their release. Once free, John Williams published the story of his captivity, entitled The Redeemed Captive. Eunice Williams, who was only seven at the time of the Deerfield raid, was the only Williams child not redeemed from captivity. Over the years Eunice essentially became Indian, married and Indian man, and gave birth to children who were considered wholly Indian. The balance of the book focuses on John Williams’s efforts to make his family whole. It is through the inherent mystery and drama of this family story that Demos constructs a panoramic view of Puritan society. He traces the importance of ideas of identity – both racial and religious. Eunice’s loss to the Indians was heartbreaking for John Williams and his redeemed children because she became Indian and a Catholic – in Williams’s own writing it is the latter that is far more troubling than the former.

Demos’s study is not, strictly speaking, a work concerned with the captivity narrative as a cultural artifact. Instead, he uses the lens of captivity to discuss life in British and French colonial North America, addressing through captivity issues as wide-ranging as diplomacy and warfare, clothing and identity, and salvation and the possibility of religious plurality. His work, although written with a popular audience in mind, is important because no other recent work on captivity has reached as wide an audience. The accessibility of Demos’s study is commendable, but his habit of literary reconstruction – where he leads the reader down

pathways of imagined historical veracity, paved with educated guesses – might make
traditionalist historians cringe. Even still, Demos provides important context for the casual
reader and the scholar of captivity narratives.

In the first decade of the new millennium scholars of the Indian captivity narrative
moved beyond Rowlandson’s text and the early British captivity narratives, and extended their
analysis both temporally and geographically, appreciating later captivity narratives, and those
narratives of captivity under other colonial powers operating in North America. However, even
with an expanded focus on new areas and other captivities scholars continued to find new
arenas of meaning within the Puritan captivity narratives as well.

Important monographs published in the 2000s include Evan Haefeli and Kevin
Sweeney’s two companion volumes dealing with the 1704 raid by Indians and their French allies
on English settlers in Deerfield, Massachusetts. In the first volume the authors deal with the
context preceding the attack, and the connections between the Indian population and the
Deerfield settlers57. The authors pay close attention to a discussion of French and Indian
motives for the raid; they do not, however, analyze Deerfield captivity narratives as intellectual
artifacts.

The latter study by this duo focuses specifically on narratives of the Deerfield attack in a
multivocal way, assessing English, French, and Native American texts regarding the raid.58 The
volume includes long excerpts from the texts of these narratives, with explanatory text
providing context and significance. Perhaps the most simultaneously interesting and

57 Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield (Amherst:
University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

58 Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, Captive Histories: English, French, and Native Narratives of the 1704 Deerfield
problematic aspect of the work is the manner in which the authors construct the Native narratives. Unlike the French and British accounts which are roughly contemporaneous with the Deerfield raid, the constructed view of the Native American participants is built on statements taken from sources ranging from 1842 at the earliest, and 2005 at the latest. The creativity with which the authors build a Native American voice for the raid at Deerfield reflects the problems inherent in constructing a dialogue between written and oral sources. The authors attempt to minimize the issue of non-contemporary Indian sources by placing them against written, contemporary, non-Indian sources. Even with the use of anachronistic Native American sources, Haefeli and Sweeney’s work appreciates the numerous voices that surround even one specific instance of violence and subsequent captivity.

Other important monographs focusing on the Indian captivity narrative published in the 2000s include Teresa Toulouse’s *The Captive’s Position*, Lorrayne Carroll’s *Rhetorical Drag*, and Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola’s *The War in Words*. Toulouse’s study is the most closely aligned with previous work on early Indian captivity narratives, and builds upon, yet significantly differs from her earlier article which addressed concepts of credit in Rowlandson’s narrative.59 In this study, Toulouse understands captivity narratives “as cultural products that involve colonial attitudes toward both Europe and the local scene in Massachusetts”.60 She finds that the appropriation of early narratives by the Mathers’, for example, reflected their need to control the narratives’ power for a domestic audience that was responding to changes...


60 Ibid., 6.
both at home and abroad. Furthermore, she complicates the image of the female captive, placing this figure also within a broader context – against equivalent female “types” of the witch and the fornicator. Ultimately, the female captive, unlike these other, even more troublesome women, “is represented as submissive, obedient, and loyal to the tradition of the New English ‘fathers’ and their God.” Even thus structured as a “safe” female figure, Toulouse suggests that it might be the captive female’s very passivity that gave her entrée into a wider world as a captive and as a voice of authority, which would not be possible for a more overtly problematic figure. Finally, Toulouse places the narratives within a context of colonial ambivalence, an ambivalence within which the wilderness of captivity, “re/constructs associations with the moral and psychological Babylon of Catholic Europe and post-Restoration England, on the one hand, and with the questionable spiritual status of colonials considered disloyal to the traditions of the founder, on the other.”

Published in the same year as Toulouse’s work, but rather more provocatively titled is Lorrayne Carroll’s *Rhetorical Drag: Gender, Impersonation, Captivity, and the Writing of History*, which also appreciates male control of the female voice in Puritan captivity narratives. Carroll specifically interrogates those works where, through a careful reading of the archival record, she determines that the words attributed to women in a particular narrative – for example in Cotton Mather’s revisions of Hannah Duston’s captivity tale – were in fact directly written by

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61 For example, Toulouse pays close attention to the impact the Glorious Revolution had on the reception of captivity narratives. See for example ibid., 119.
62 Ibid., 9.
63 Ibid., 11.
64 Lorrayne Carroll, *Rhetorical Drag: Gender Impersonation, Captivity, and the Writing of History* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006).
male authors. She gives the term “Rhetorical Drag” to this practice and suggests that male authors “adopted rhetorical drag because, through this mode, they could impute to their own productions the power of the female captive’s empirical knowledge of both the events of captivity and the cultural practices of the people who captured her”. Carroll also makes the important argument that women, through their errand into the wilderness, achieved a certain societal status and legitimacy that even members of the male ecclesiastic hierarchy could not match.

Katheryn Derounian-Stodola, whose work in the early 1990s sparked renewed interest in the Indian captivity narrative as a subject of study in intellectual and literary history, also closes the decade of the 2000s with a work that again expands scholarly consideration of the Indian captivity narrative by reading one discrete historical moment – the Dakota Wars in Minnesota – entirely through extant narratives. Using narratives as historical sources sounds similar to the earliest scholars’ approach to Indian captivity narratives. Derounian-Stodola’s approach to the Indian sources differs from the earlier studies, showing more sophistication in by reading the phenomenon of captivity as a metaphor for the Dakota War as a whole, and paying particular attention to marginal figures whose narratives do not clearly fall on one or another side of the line dividing Euro-Americans from Native Americans. Furthermore, her work is compelling because it places in dialogue two sets of narratives – those written by Euro-American captives, and those by Indian captives. Derounian-Stodala slightly avoids the problem

65 Ibid., 7.
66 Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, The War in Words: Reading the Dakota Conflict through the Captivity Literature (Lincoln, NE: Univ of Nebraska Pr, 2009).
facing Haefeli and Sweeney’s similar study, because historians recorded oral histories of the Dakota Wars earlier, in the 1930s.

In addition to these important monographs, the early years of the twentieth century witnessed the publication of a number of important articles addressing Indian captivity narratives. All of these works, however, focus on the earliest narratives and do not extend their analysis into the early National period. Tiffany Potter interrogates the intersection between race and gender in Mary Rowlandson’s captivity narrative. Like Feary, Potter also agrees that these early narratives “did not include the racial determinism prevalent in the ideas of difference after the mid-eighteenth century.”67 Potter focuses mainly on Rowlandson’s appreciation of indigenous femininity—how Rowlandson conceptualizes her female, Indian counterparts within her captivity narrative. Perhaps not terribly surprisingly, Potter finds that Rowlandson sees Indian women only through a framework of Puritan femininity. That is to say that Rowlandson understands Indian women only insofar as they fail to live up to Puritan expectations of wives and mothers. This unsympathetic understanding of Indian women confirmed Puritan cultural and religious superiority for Rowlandson as well as for the wider audience Cotton Mather sought to reach by publishing her narrative.

Andrew Newman offers a fresh approach to the Rowlandson narrative, as he analyzes the “literacy frontier” between the Puritan settlers and their Indian counterparts. Newman finds that literacy was an important tool for the colonizers and “played a familiar role within the machine of territorial expansion, generating surveyors’ reports, underwriting dubious land

transfers, and filling out a self-serving ledger of transactions and conflicts." Furthermore "the literacy frontier stands for an abstract cultural boundary that existed in the imagination of some Anglo-Americans, who, in crossing it, felt compelled to invoke literacy as a primary symbol of their identity." So for example, Newman focuses his attention on references to reading the Bible found within the narratives.

Wendy Castro also covers new ground in her study of the significances of clothing in captivity narratives. By reading narratives such as Susannah Willard Johnson’s with a specific focus on the meaning of clothing and various states of dress and undress, Castro discovers layered meaning attached to clothing. Nakedness, for example, was part of the ritual process of tribal adoption. However, perhaps because of this connection, the casual Colonial reader at home saw losing one’s clothing as only second to torture among the fears of captivity. Why such an anxiety over clothing? Castro connects the loss of clothing to the loss of one’s identity, finding that fear over one’s state of dress or lack of proper attire, “is linked to the conflation of clothing and person, and the anxieties exhibited by the colonists during their imprisonment illustrate how important clothing was to their construction of identity, particularly in the New World, where the fear of degeneration was ever present.” By losing one’s clothing, the captive was left vulnerable to the elements, to potential violence, and ultimately to possible cultural conversion.

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69 Ibid., 32.
71 Ibid., 104.
Nan Goodman’s work emphasizes the language of money within Mary Rowlandson’s narrative. Goodman reads within the Rowlandson narrative evidence of shifting ideas regarding commerce. By comparing Rowlandson’s narrative to earlier captivities in the North American continent – such as those of Spanish explorers in the Southeast – Goodman discovers that Rowlandson differs from these earlier captivities in that she “incorporates a more money-oriented version of mercantilism into her narrative than her Spanish predecessor did” – a more capitalist understanding of money and exchange.72 Goodman’s work is an important read, as it suggests realms of inquiry beyond ideas of race, gender, and belonging.

Finally, the work of Michael Sturma suggests the degree to which scholars stretch the metaphor of captivity in some of their analyses. His work compares tales of captivity among Native Americans to stories of Alien abduction. Sturma finds that both tales of alien abduction and Indian captivity share as central “concerns crossing frontiers and the forced experience of another culture.”73 Sturma also connects abduction and captivity to ideas of transculturation. The parallel Sturma draws is simultaneously fascinating and problematic. Unlike alien abduction stories, where the context (as far as we know) is a fabrication, tales of captivity – even fictionalized accounts – depended specifically on the realness of captivity to attract readers’ attention. The questionable reality of alien abduction tales makes their reception among readers and listeners qualitatively different from the reception given to stories of Indian captivity.

The Historiography of Barbary Captivity

The North African states collectively known as the Barbary Powers first entered the American imaginary in a forceful way during the earliest years of American independence. Europeans and North Americans recognized the region for its fearsome privateers who created an economy in the North African regencies built on privateering and hostage-taking. Captive taken at sea generally faced one or two fates as they awaited redemption: the lucky ones served as domestic help to wealthy Barbary families, while those less fortunate did back breaking labor on public works projects. They remained enslaved until their respective governments, families, or specific charitable organizations formed to redeem captives, paid the fee to the regency for their redemption.\textsuperscript{74} European nations, including the United Kingdom, mitigated the Barbary threat by signing separate treaties with the North African states and paying annual tributes in cash and kind to the Barbary monarchs. Before Independence, treaty agreements between the Crown and the Barbary regencies protected citizens in North America travelling at sea.\textsuperscript{75}

With Independence this protection evaporated.\textsuperscript{76} American ships fell prey to Barbary privateers very soon after the settlement of peace between the United States and Great Britain. With the capture of the \textit{Betsey} and its crew in 1784 by Moroccan privateers, the subsequent

\textsuperscript{74} The funds normally came from an individual’s family – if they could afford it – or from charitable religious orders or the government of the person’s country of citizenship. See Stephen Clissold, \textit{The Barbary Slaves} (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977).


\textsuperscript{76} Lambert, 28.
seizure of the *Maria* and *Dauphin* by Algerians in 1785, and finally the detention of 307 U.S. sailors from the *Philadelphia* after it ran aground off the coast of Tripoli in 1803, the United States faced its first post-Independence foreign policy crisis. It was only after the Navy’s successful bombardment of Algiers in 1815 that Barbary aggression against American sea-faring vessels ended. The genre of the Barbary captivity narrative grew out of this episode, as captives wrote their stories after their redemption in order to financially support themselves and their families. Authors of Barbary captivity tales, like their counterparts writing Indian captivity narratives, also eventually created completely fictional works.

Scholars have yet to give Barbary captivity narratives the prodigious attention given to narratives of Indian captivity. Sustained scholarly inquiry into the Barbary captivity narratives began only in the last two decades. Significantly, interest in the narratives themselves grew as contemporary along with tensions between the Muslim world and the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century. As historians sought to understand the current crisis, their retrospective gaze considered earlier frictions between the United States and the wider Muslim World. As scholars encountered the earliest American military interventions in the Middle East and North Africa, they turned their analytical gaze from events on the battlefield to

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the narratives of American captives. The state of the field has not yet reached maturity, and much more work remains, particularly with regard to placing the Barbary texts in a more meaningful dialogue with other contemporary works of captivity. Tracing the existing literature demonstrates the various penumbras remaining in Barbary captivity scholarship.

The earliest work to address American texts out of Barbary is Milton Cantor’s 1962 article focusing on the correspondence between Joel Barlow – the American agent in Algiers – and his wife. As Cantor explains, Barlow wrote more than 106 letters to his wife throughout his time serving in a diplomatic capacity in Europe and North Africa. Barlow’s letters include his unvarnished impressions of life in Algiers, such as the following opinions on the city of Algiers: “It is impossible to conceive of so much physical and moral discomfort accumulated in a single place. There are no streets, properly speaking, but little dark allies, which run crosswise and zigzag among an enormous heap of houses, thrown together without order and without number.”

Strictly speaking, Barlow’s letters to his wife are not captivity texts, as the Algerians never captures Barlow, who served only as a diplomat in Algiers. Like earlier scholars of the Indian captivity narrative, Cantor also sees Barlow’s letters mostly as a truthful, primary source.

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79 Captives redeemed and returned to America from their captivity in Barbary found a ready audience for their narratives. The reason for publishing such tales were two-fold: to provide a source of income for the returned captive, and to publicize the plight of the remaining captives. See James R. Lewis, "Savages of the Seas: Barbary Captivity Tales and Images of Muslims in the Early Republic," The Journal of American Culture 13, no. 2 (1990): 77.


81 Ibid., 95.
His article provides the historical background of Barlow’s tenure and reprints eighteen letters in full as an addendum to his article. Cantor does not investigate the documents further, nor does he read them for evidence of early American constructions of race and difference, even though the letters are redolent with such imagery. Even still, Cantor’s work is important, as it represents an early scholarly attempt to glean meaning from an American writing about his perceptions of North Africa and its denizens.

Shortly after Cantor’s work, G.A. Starr published the first real study focusing specifically on Barbary captivity narrative.\(^\text{82}\) Starr pays closest attention to narratives written during the seventeenth century, mostly by British authors. Still, Starr importantly discusses the value of the narrative in structuring European ideas of racial types. He also describes the interconnectedness of North Africa and Native American otherness when he writes: “If the New World was becoming the subject of Europe’s “exotic dream,” Barbary had long been the subject of its exotic nightmare; if the “noble savage” was becoming a mythical hero, his antitypes, the Turk and the Moor, had long been fabulous villains.”\(^\text{83}\) Starr connects the narratives to a British audience’s desire for adventure literature, but does not interrogate the meanings behind racial and religious constructions within the Barbary narratives.

Substantive analysis into the meanings behind racial and religious constructions in the Barbary narratives began with the work of Paul Baepler, who published his first works on Barbary Captivity in the 1990s. Baepler’s analyses of Barbary captivity narratives inspired a wave of scholarly interest in the subject that continues, largely unabated. His earliest work on


\(^{83}\) Ibid., 35.
Barbary captivity narratives, an article published in 1995 in *Early American Literature*, begins by connecting the Puritan captivity narrative of Mary Rowlandson to the early Barbary Captivity of Joshua Gee who was taken captive on a journey after he left Boston in January of 1680. Baepler admits that Gee’s story has not had the influence of Rowlandson’s narrative on the American psyche, mostly due to the fact that the Gee narrative had been lost to history until 1943, and even still only exists in fragments. Still, reading the early Barbary narratives, Baepler suggests that:

> their appearance at roughly the same time as Indian captivity narratives suggests that the two were mutually influential and that we should reconsider a long-held belief about American literature: that the Indian captivity narrative, often considered the first indigenous American narrative, had, if not precedents, then at least influences as far away as Africa.

In this article, Baepler does not draw explicit textual parallels between Indian and Barbary narratives, but instead sets the groundwork for future study by using extant British narratives of captivity in North Africa from the seventeenth century to contextualize the Gee narrative and to explain some of the more prominent hallmarks of the genre. Common tropes found in the British texts and explained by Baepler include deliverance from peril by an accommodating Providence, and the frightening spectacle of one’s countryman “Turning Turk” disavowing his former religion and nationality. In this article Baepler focuses only on one captivity narrative from the North American continent – that of James Gee – but by the end of


85 Ibid., 95.
the decade he published an important monograph specifically discussing American Barbary captivity narratives.\textsuperscript{86}

In his \textit{White Slaves, African Masters} Baepler provides an anthology of American Barbary captivities and ties the story of American captives in North Africa to the history of the early Republic. Importantly, Baepler connects the narratives to the extension of early American military power into the world, as well as to a growing rhetoric of anti-slavery in the early republic.\textsuperscript{87} Furthermore, Baepler connects the description of North African backwardness and savagery to similar constructions of Native Americans in the stories of Indian captivity. Baepler does not trace these themes in depth in this anthology; however, by providing representative texts and an appended publication history of American Barbary captivity narratives, Baepler’s work encouraged a blossoming of subsequent scholarship in the next decade. This body of work includes important contributions by Baepler himself.

It is difficult to classify recent works on Barbary captivity into discrete categories, since the scholarship has been refreshingly wide ranging. This explication will, therefore, proceed chronologically, beginning with the work of Hester Blum.\textsuperscript{88} Blum connects Barbary captivity narratives to the less specific genre of American seafaring narratives. She suggests that early

\textsuperscript{86} Baepler, \textit{White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives}. Baepler was not the first to make the connection between anti-Slavery and the enslavement of White Americans in North Africa. As early as 1853, Charles Sumner himself had made the connection in his work \textit{White Slavery in the Barbary States}. See Charles Sumner, \textit{White Slavery in the Barbary States} (Boston: J.P. Jewett, 1853). More recently Benilde Montgomery explores the connection between Barbary enslavement and the anti-slavery rhetoric in the years directly after the Revolution. See Benilde Montgomery, "White Captives, African Slaves: A Drama of Abolition," \textit{Eighteenth-century studies} 27, no. 4 (1994): 615-630. Montgomery finds, in particular that, “stories [of American captivity] from Algeria provided antislavery activists with the kind of new image they needed to dramatize where and how the War of Independence had remained glaringly incomplete” (615).


American sailors wrote their narratives, “unlike the more widely read sea writing of the antebellum period...to an audience of their fellow seamen”\textsuperscript{89} Her work focuses closely on the transmission of information within sailing communities and among seafaring men. She pays less attention to the kinds of questions addressed in this work, namely questions of identity formation vis-à-vis race, religion, and gender in the early republic\textsuperscript{90}.

Martha Rojas, like Hester Blum, also connects the Barbary captivity narrative to broader currents of communication.\textsuperscript{91} Specifically, by reading the captivity writing of James Leander Cathcart, Rojas connects narratives of Barbary captivity to early American diplomatic correspondence. Importantly, Rojas also analyzes constructions of manliness within the narrative finding that Cathcart’s “journal and letter-book exemplify how concepts of honor, masculinity, and patriotism...[helped] to fashion a discourse of nationhood that could simultaneously sustain tropes of beleaguered and avenging manhood.”\textsuperscript{92} Her work is limited in a sense, because she does not place Cathcart’s work within the context of other Barbary narratives. Additionally, while Rojas does explicate constructions of manliness in Cathcart’s writing, her work does not explore other questions of identity-construction in terms of race or religion.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 135.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 138.
\textsuperscript{91} See Martha Elena Rojas, ”'Insults Unpunished': Barbary Captives, American Slaves, and the Negotiation of Liberty,” \textit{Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal} 1, no. 2 (2003): 159-186. Like Blum, Rojas connects narratives of Barbary captivity to early American diplomatic correspondence. Her work does; however, analyze constructions of manliness within Cathcart’s writing. Her study is limited in the sense that she only looks at Cathcart’s narrative, and does not broaden the scope of her inquiry. Additionally, her work does not explore other questions of identity-construction in terms of race or religion.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 161.
Paul Baepler builds on his earlier work assessing the Barbary captivity narratives in his article, published in 2004, which makes the case for considering the Barbary captivity narrative alongside the Indian captivity narrative in terms of importance to the formation of American culture. Baepler studies the earliest narratives, with special emphasis given, again, to the captivity of Joshua Gee. Fundamentally, Baepler’s argument is that one cannot understand the epistemological processes at work in the Indian captivity narrative without also analyzing the same processes at work in the Barbary narratives, a contention that drives the analysis in this present study. An interesting side commentary that does not form the heart of Baepler’s analysis is his connection of the Barbary narrative to subsequent understandings of the Muslim world – even contemporary filmic representations of terrorist captors – showing the durability of the “dangerous Muslim” trope.

Both Elizabeth Dillon and Sarah Ford extend the scholarly understanding of Barbary captivity to include plays that have as a central theme the captivity of Americans in North Africa. Dillon’s work focuses on a close reading of Sarah Rowson’s play *Slaves in Algiers*

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95 See Sarah Ford, "Liberty Contained: Sarah Pogson’s 'the Young Carolinians; or, Americans in Algiers'," *Early American Literature* 41, no. 1 (2006): 109-128. Ford’s analysis focuses on a play called The Young Carolinians; or, Americans in Algiers. The essay’s most important contribution to an understanding of early American literature may be Ford’s clarification of the play’s authorship. Previous scholars had attributed the work to Maria Pinckney, but Ford’s sleuthing through copyright ledgers provides convincing evidence that the true author of the play was, in fact, Sarah Pogson. Apart from this important fact, Ford’s analysis is otherwise rather uninteresting. She reads the play as largely a comedy of manners that “suggest that societies, even the new republic with its inclinations toward democracy, needs clear class structures” (109). While the play does, certainly emphasize appropriate nuptial bonds, Ford ignores clear evidence that questions of race and religion mattered to Pogson. Quizically, Ford finds that because of “Pogson’s contextual choice of Algerian captivity and her use of dual settings [Algeria and America], she must divert attention from the obvious issues of race and religion to focus on class” (114). If Pogson was so eager to avoid those issues, why did she choose Algiers and Barbary captivity as central themes?
Dillon makes the following points through her reading of Rowson’s play: “that race emerges as an aspect of gender construction within republican and nationalist politics in the early US” and “that the creation of new forms of nationalized (and racialized) identity occurs in a global-transatlantic context rather than a solely national one.” Dillon valorizes a racial reading of captivity narratives, yet does not mention important references to religious difference found within the work. Furthermore, she ignores the connection between the play’s treatment of race and fears of miscegenation and racial dilution.

Sarah Ford, in her reading of Sarah Pogson’s *The Young Carolinians* (published in 1818), focuses not on the construction of difference within the play, but instead she reads the play largely as a comedy of manners that “suggest[s] that societies, even the new republic with its inclinations toward democracy, needs clear class structures.” While the play does, certainly emphasize appropriate nuptial bonds, Ford ignores clear evidence that questions of race and religion mattered to Pogson. Quizically, Ford finds that because of “Pogson’s contextual choice of Algerian captivity and her use of dual settings [Algeria and America], she must divert attention from the obvious issues of race and religion to focus on class.” Ford leaves her reader wondering, if Pogson were so eager to avoid those issues, why did she choose Algiers and Barbary captivity as central themes?

A number of scholars looking at the Barbary captivity narrative relate the genre to early American articulations of power, questions of exceptionalism, and possibilities of multiculturalism. For Moulay Ali Bouanini the descriptions of North Africa found in Barbary

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96 Dillon: 408.
98 Ibid., 114.
captivity narratives represent an effort to discursively control the Muslim Middle East.99 Bouanani makes the argument that the general “theme of the moral decay of the Oppressive Other to be resisted by a vigorous and virtuous America” undergirds the Barbary captivity narrative.100 Furthermore, he suggests that both Barbary and Indian captivity narratives served an essentially propagandistic role in the emerging American imperium, objectifying the Native American and the North African Muslim in a way that “underscored the supposed superiority of English and Puritan value and culture.”101 Bouanani does not clearly delineate the boundary between British Colonial chauvinism and a distinctly American handling of the captivity narrative, and also overreaches when he suggests that the underlying propagandistic motive of the narratives was “to rally the population in support of the wars launched against the Barbary States by the politicians.”102 Bouanani’s also attempts to draw too close a connection between the lead up to the Barbary Wars – where appeasement through diplomacy and payment of tribute were clearly the first diplomatic options attempted – with the qualitatively different lead-up to the second Iraq War.

Lawrence Peskin also explores ideas of American power reflected in the captivity narratives; however, he is much more cautious in his assessment of American military power in the early years of the Republic. Peskin pays closest attention to the networks of information revealed by the Barbary narratives, but he also reads within the texts American fears of Great Britain’s continuing power over its former colonial possession. Like Revolutionary Era Indian


100 Ibid., 400.

101 Ibid., 399.

102 Ibid., 400.
captivity narratives that castigate the British for stirring up Indians to trouble settlers, Peskin demonstrates that similar beliefs operated in the Barbary narratives, and in the public reaction to the Barbary captivity on the American mainland. Peskin even suggests that “Americans were so concerned with their internal weaknesses and lowly position in the world of European statecraft that they had little time to devote to contemplation of Algiers” – meaning they saw the real enemy as Great Britain and the European power structure, and saw the Barbary pirates simply as thugs working for the Europeans.103

For Jacob Berman and Gordon Sayre, reading the Barbary narratives reveals a discourse that both parallels and challenges traditional structures of American exceptionalism.104 Berman finds within the captured sailors’ narratives a contemporary critique on the limits of American freedom. Instead of proto-imperialist bombast, Berman finds within sailor’s captivity narratives a process whereby “working-class sailors used Barbary types to establish comparisons between themselves and the disenfranchised in America’s nascent democracy.”105 Berman finds that these sailors were essentially pointing out where the rhetoric of a free early American republic did not match reality.

Gordon Sayre positions his work against earlier studies of Indian and Barbary captivity narratives. Within his study he expresses the “wish to explore the potential for captivity narratives to escape the politics of American exceptionalism and be read multilaterally and transnationally, first in a transatlantic context that responds to calls to break down the

105 Ibid., 19.
distinction between English and American literature, and then in a hemispheric and truly global context.\textsuperscript{106} Sayre is correct in his desire to break down barriers between the text to allow for a greater appreciation of commonalties between captivities that appear different because of reified, modern categorical boundaries. Sayre’s work is also significant because he highlights the danger implicit in transcultural figures. He argues, borrowing a concept from Lrorayne Carroll, that within the structure of the Barbary captivity narrative “sentimentality is deployed through the device of rhetorical drag in order to shore up the defenses against the threat of the renegade.”\textsuperscript{107}

Even as the captivity narratives in general, and the Barbary captivity tales in particular, provide fertile ground for the exploration of structures of difference and othering, Jacob Berman and Keri Holt provide an important counterpoint, suggesting that certain narratives showed an acceptance of cultural difference. Berman, in an article that actually preceded his monograph on Barbary captivity, connects the narratives to ideas of an emergent, or inevitably multicultural nation. For Berman, “narratives of captivity, real and fictional, forced their audiences to confront both the dangers and the inevitability of a multicultural nation.”\textsuperscript{108} Berman’s appreciation of multiculturalism within the texts of Barbary captivities is compelling; however, his works seems to apply, retrospectively, the particularly modern lens of multiculturalism. Readers and writers of captivity narratives may have understood the need to

\textsuperscript{106} Gordon M. Sayre, ”Renegades from Barbary: The Transnational Turn in Captivity Studies,” \textit{American Literary History} 22, no. 2 (2010): 349.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 354.

manage cultural difference, but it is unlikely that they would frame this understanding in terms of multiculturalism.

Keri Holt also emphasizes cultural understanding in her explication of one particular episode in Royall Tyler’s *The Algerine Captive*, but her analysis is less problematic when set against Berman’s work. The passage Holt dissects involves a captive called Underhill who engages in a dialogue over religion with a “Mahomaten priest” who is only referred to as Mollah within the text. For Holt, this dialogue escapes easy categorization – for it is not one in which the Christian position wins outright nor is it characterized by an outright castigation of Muslim belief. Instead, Holt finds that the dialogue between the characters “suggests that engaging with the ‘heretical’ texts and practices of Islam can actually produce relationships of tolerance and cooperation, rather than conflict,” as the characters respectfully agree to disagree over theological matters. 109

Recent studies of Barbary captivity plumb a wide variety of meanings within the text. Significantly, apart from the work of Sayre, Baepler, and Bouanani, as well as important contributions by Linda Colley and Lisa Voight, scholars have largely avoided side by side analyses of both Indian and Barbary captivity narratives. 110 Furthermore, none of the existing

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110 Linda Colley’s work, although it specifically addresses captivity and its narratives within the framework of the global British empire, is important specifically because of its scope. Her work is “big history” in the best sense, as it traces the theme of captivity through British North America, the British Mediterranean, South Asia, and even into nineteenth and twentieth century Afghanistan. Her broad approach to the subject influenced my own decision to approach the subject of Barbary captivity by placing it in dialogue with contemporary texts of Indian Captivity. See Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850*. (New York: Anchor Books, 2002,) Like Colley, Linda Voigt’s work also approaches the subject of captivity at the imperial level, focusing as it does on the empires of the Iberian Peninsula. She investigates captivity and its relation to the transfer of information in the New World and in accounts of captivity among the Muslims. See Lisa Voigt, *Writing Captivity in the Early Modern Atlantic*: 49
studies provide an overall theoretical explanation for the epistemological processes underlying the captivity narrative. This paper seeks to fill that void by applying to the narratives current theoretical understandings of ethnogenesis – the process by which an ethnic group emerges and distinguishes itself from other groups.

Ethnogenesis and the Captivity Narrative

Ethnogenesis is a relatively new concept which emerges from the scholarly fields of sociology, archaeology, and cultural anthropology. The term refers to the process by which new ethnic identities emerge out of specific instance of ethnic mixing. So far, scholars have used ethnogenesis as a theoretical tool to understand the creation of new and distinct ethnic formulations in the borderlands of the Southwest, the Caribbean, West Africa, Central Asia, Siberia, Japan and medieval Europe. Apart from studies focusing on the creation of ethnicities in North America as a consequence of European discovery and the collapse and coalescence of Indian tribes, early American scholars are only now beginning to apply

Circulations of Knowledge and Authority in the Iberian and English Imperial Worlds (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

ethnogenesis to the development of White ethnic identity in early America. Eric Kaufmann uses ethnogenesis to clarify the development of what he terms Anglo-Saxon identity within the United States. In his article Kaufmann posits that “in the case of the United States, the national ethnic group was Anglo-American Protestant.” Work recently published in the *William and Mary Quarterly* by James Sweet, James Sidbury and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra will hopefully spur other early-Americanists to consider ethnogenesis as a driving concept in their studies of early American concepts of race, religion, gender and belonging.

Ethnogenesis as a concept dates to the mid-eighteenth century and was initially a response to the idea that over time racial mixing compromised the purity and vigor of a particular racial group. The modern theory of ethnogenesis emerged in the 1960s and 1970s with scholars emphasizing that “ethnogenesis is a continuing phenomenon, traceable in the past and ongoing in the present.” In its most simple definition, ethnogenesis seeks to understand the process by which distinct ethnic groups – “a named human population that

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112 Kaufmann: 439. Kaufmann connects the emergence of a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant ethnicity to a number of important symbols that include election, the myth of a racially pure European heritage, a drive to assimilate and ensure that new settlers conformed to WASP cultural norms, the valorization of the Yeoman farmer as an important symbol, the connection to a specific territory and frontier, and finally the idealization of the Jeffersonian Era as a golden age of American history. His work focuses much attention on the formation of the Anglo-Saxon myth, but does not investigate the structuring of a superior White American ethnicity against oppositional types. Furthermore, his work presents a sociological understanding of ethnicity formation, and does not delve into a reading of representative texts that show the process in action.


115 Ibid., 35.
shares a sense of solidarity” – form. Importantly, ethnicity is not synonymous with kinship. Members of a particular society, working together over a number of years, create the idea of their distinct ethnicity by designating the characteristics of who does and does not belong. Kinship, however, depends on real, biological connections between family members. Ethnicity, then, is a social construct, created by marshaling a collection of agreed-upon indicators including concepts such as language, racial attributes, social mores, political structures, gendered relationships, and a shared geographical space. Using these touchstones of identity, writers, thinkers, politicians, and every day people “form a shared meaning system and a related social order that transform[s] them into a new, identifiable culture group.”

For the North American context, ethnogenesis necessarily involved grappling with concepts of race, language, and religion. What is perhaps less superficially evident is the role played by gender constructs and sexual mores in constructing an ethnic identity. Barbara Voss explains in particular two very important ways concepts of sex and gender affected ethnogenesis. First, she explains that the development of distinct ethnicity required “intragroup pressures to contribute to the biological and cultural perpetuation” of a perceived ethnic group. Second, the purity of ethnicity was guarded by “prohibitions against racial miscegenation and anxieties about marrying out” of one’s ethnic group.

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117 Ibid.


119 Both quotations: Voss, 32.
The genre of the captivity narrative – in both its Indian and Barbary iterations – represents a fundamentally appropriate terrain on which to deploy the concept of ethnogenesis, particularly during the earliest years of the American republic. For in this case, not only are American settlers encountering their “others” both on the mainland and in North Africa, but they are understanding these others in terms that distinctly qualify and clarify the racial, cultural, and gendered attributes that are deemed most appropriate to the emerging American, White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant majority. Furthermore the narratives in this study are particularly fitted to an ethnogenetic understanding as they were published after the Revolution and during the earliest years of the republic, when Americans were in the active process of crafting a distinct identity apart from Great Britain, and in fact came to understand Great Britain not merely as the principal source of American culture – Albion’s seed out of which grew the American republic - but as a distinct, and often adversarial nation with its own, antagonistic foreign policy. Reading the narratives as documents of distinction – documents that clarify the boundaries of Americanness is the fundamental point of the following analysis.

120 My contention, along the lines of Eric Kaufmann’s work, is that ethnogenesis valorized a simultaneously White and Protestant identity. Scholarly work in early American supports the contention that Protestantism defined normative religious life in British North America and the Early republic. Ruth Bloch, for example, demonstrates convincingly that both British Colonial settlers and Early Americans understood the Roman Catholic Church to be synonymous with irrational religious belief, tyranny, and the Antichrist. Bloch demonstrates that, while rabid anti-Catholicism lessened in the British mainland by the eighteenth century, the same did not hold true for the North American context, where anti-Catholicism continued largely unabated. See Ruth H. Bloch, Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Other works that also describe the connection between the developing American identity and Protestantism include: Thomas S. Engeman and Michael P. Zuckert, eds., Protestantism and the American Founding (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004); Mark A. Noll, “The American Revolution and Protestant Evangelicalism,” The Journal of Interdisciplinary History 23, no. 3 (1993); Carla Gardina Pestana, Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

DEMONIC, MONSTROUS, ANIMAL, AND RENEGADE: STRUCTURES OF DIFFERENCE WITHIN CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES

The texts of captivity narratives operate, at the most elemental level, as tracts supporting the American project. Even in the earliest year of the new republic, writers expressed a desire to control the literary other in a real and essentially imperialist manner.\(^1\) Within the body of captivity narratives, the clarification of who did and did not belong in the new Republic furthered this proto-imperialist program. Scholars have long read Indian captivity narratives and Barbary captivity narratives as privileging either race or religion.\(^2\) The present analysis differs from previous works focusing on either race or religion within the captivity narratives in two important respects. First, a close reading of the texts shows that, when structuring difference between captives and captors, the writers of captivity narratives did not overwhelmingly focus on either race or religion in their constructions of difference. Instead, the works structures American ethnic superiority against an oppositional scaffolding built along dual axes of race and religion. Second, while previous works have almost exclusively looked at structures of difference as they operated within each distinct genre of Indian or Barbary captivity, this study appreciates the commonality of epistemological processes at work trans-Atlantically within both sets of narratives.

\(^1\) This imperial ambition reveals itself most overtly in the Barbary captivity plays of this period which are the subject of chapter 4 in this study.

The language of racial difference is perhaps the most easily appreciated structure of difference evident within the narratives. Here the authors generally describe North American “savages” and North African “barbarians” uncharitably. Even this early in the history of the American republic writers conveyed a distinct concept of normative “American” whiteness – whereby those whose phenotypes\(^3\) differed most from a Euro-American standard were viewed as different, uglier, and inferior.\(^4\) Race and religion operated in conjunction within the narratives to structure difference. Almost universally, those passages within the narratives that described racial difference in the most disparaging terms also included references to the North Africans’ and the North American Indians’ devilish or monstrous appearance.\(^5\) Although this might strike the modern reader as simply a melodramatic turn of phrase, there is an underlying significance to this “devilish” language. As Richard Slotkin suggests in his work *Regeneration Through Violence* the Puritans largely understood the indigenous inhabitants of North America as actively worshipping the devil and being unredeemably evil.\(^6\) The Native Americans were the

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\(^3\) The term phenotype is particular to genetic biology – meaning the physical characteristics that are a consequence of the genetic code. I do not mean to suggest, by using this term that race is anything besides a socially constructed concept. However, it is true that there is variability in human physical appearance, and it was this difference that the narratives focus on and us to structure a valorized white Americanness.


religious antithesis to the Puritan elect, God’s very own chosen few. Although the currency of Puritan election diminished toward the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, the language of the captivity narratives still conceived of the Native American and North African other in devilish terms.

Beyond the descriptions of Native American and North African others that employ both racial and religious language to suggest demonic differences, are the direct references to Native American and Islamic religious belief systems and rituals. Ostensibly delivered as factual accounts, the descriptions of religious practice found in the captivity narratives nonetheless, and perhaps unsurprisingly, betray a bias toward Christianity. Although the pro-Christian bias is understandable, what is more compelling is the fact that the structuring of religious otherness includes the implicit and often explicit determination that non-Christian belief is fundamentally irrational. Again, what matters here is not the appreciation of religious difference, and American religious superiority, by American authors of captivity narratives, but instead the articulation of this difference in terms of the Enlightenment-era distinction between rational religiosity and irrational superstition. The connection between Christian belief and rationality reflects the religious milieu of the time, when Christian republicanism was at its height.7 However, to call the captivity texts works of Christian republicanism would be going too far. Even as they reflect the overall mood of contemporary society, the works do not necessarily have much to say about Christianity directly, and instead imply the rationality of Protestant Christianity against the foil of non-Christian backwardness.

Ethnogenesis and Race/Religion

At the broadest level the process of ethnogenesis involves articulations of a particular group’s racial and religious hallmarks. Scholars of ethnogenesis have walked a difficult line with regard to race in the formation of ethnic identity. While being careful not to suggest that race is anything but a socially determined construct, scholars such as Gregory Smoak still make the important point that “human societies ‘make’ races when they take perceived physical differences and combine them with historically and culturally derived perceptions of the Other.”

Eric Kaufmann, too, speaks to the importance of race as an overarching concept that deployed “a set of symbolic ‘border guards’…used to distinguish the Americans from surrounding populations” – particularly Native Americans and Black slaves. It is important to distinguish the modern-day understanding of race as a wholly socially constructed and culturally determined concept from ideas about race that were contemporaneous to readers and writers of the captivity narratives.

Modern scholars are far more comfortable discussing religious difference as part of ethnogenesis. Smoak for example, emphasizes the interconnection between religious and ethnic identities, finding that “religions explain who a people are, how they were created, and the nature of their relationship to the world and to others.” Smoak’s discussion of religion is connected to his study of belief systems created by new Native American ethnic communities in the nineteenth century. For the communities in his study, as for the White, Protestant early

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10 Smoak, 48.
American audience of captivity narratives, “religion became a shared discourse of identity.” Eric Kaufmann also points to the importance of religion in forging a common identity from diverse antecedents in relation to the development of an Anglo-Saxon identity. Agreeing with John Armstrong, Kaufmann finds that religion:

provided one of the few vehicles for mass communication in the pre-modern era and it was religion that was largely responsible for American intercolonial integration.

Looking farther afield during the colonial era in North America, Barbara L. Voss understands the concept of *limpieza de sangre* that developed in the Spanish-Colonial Southwest as a largely religious conception of identity, at least initially. In its first iteration *limpieza de sangre* developed as a consequence of the religious diversity of the Iberian Peninsula – “during the seven hundred years of coexistence between Muslims, Jews, and Christians.” Voss also suggests a connection between the role religion and race play concomitantly in processes of ethnogenesis when she suggests that *limpieza de sangre* evolved from a concept that defined group belonging on religious lines to one that defined belonging ostensibly along lines of geographical origin, even as the real demarcations drawn by the concept were mostly racial. Clearly, the established literature on ethnogenesis concedes the

11 Ibid.
13 Kaufmann: 442.
14 *Limpieza de Sangre* – literally, purity of blood – is a term used in Spanish and Spanish-Colonial society to distinguish hierarchies of geographical origin and race. At the most basic level, individuals who could demonstrate or create a heritage that was allegedly purely Spanish were held in higher esteem by society than individuals whose predecessors were a mixture of both Spanish and indigenous. Perhaps one of the best studies of *limpieza de sangre* applied to the colonial North American context is in: John M Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).
important role played by religion, alongside race, to guard ethnic boundaries. Apart from works investigating ethnogenesis in particular, scholars who analyze the early American period more broadly have also conceded the importance of race and religion to the creation of a distinct early American culture.

Even as a considerable body of work analyzes race and religion as important elements structuring society in the early Republic period, none of that work has looked at captivity narratives specifically for their role in helping to create an American ethnic identity. Scholars, such as those mentioned above, have either approached ethnogenesis in a rather limited way – addressing specific geographical regions and the coalescence of new identities within those regions – or have looked at race and religion\(^{16}\) without relating each to ethnogenesis in other areas of analysis, such as the law, constructions of gender, or in republican and Revolutionary Era rhetoric.\(^{17}\) This chapter traces structures of othering in racial and religious terms as they


exist in a large body of captivity narratives written during the years of the early Republic. The chapter begins with a quick word on the use of Indians and Arabs/Moors/Muslims as easy terms of reference, readily understood by the reading audience and in some senses interchangeable. An excellent example of this is the descriptions in the narratives of Native American habits or defects discussed in terms of Turkish or Muslim stereotypes, or vice versa. Furthermore, authors of narratives of Barbary captivity, almost always refer to the Arabs/Moors as savages, a term almost universally applied to Native Americans in the North American captivities. This section demonstrates both the importance of looking at Indian and Barbary captivity simultaneously, and also the currency that both Indian and North African stereotypes, together, had among readers in the Early Republic.

Indian and Ottoman as Common Terms of Reference

Writers of early American captivity narratives sought to explain the world they were describing – or in some cases creating in works that were wholly fiction – by using language and comparisons that would make sense to their readership. What surprises the modern reader is the degree to which there existed a cross-pollination of descriptive terms. Writers of both sets of narratives understood that their readers would understand references to North Africans in terms of Native American hallmarks, and vice versa. For example, in *Narratives of the Perils and Sufferings of Dr. Knight and John Slover*, published in 1783, the work closes with an afterword

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written by the work’s editor, H. Brackenridge. These closing thoughts remind the reader of earlier captivity narratives, such as Mary Rowlandson’s, where a preacher concludes the narrative indicating what the reader should take from their reading. In this case, Breckenridge is not sermonizing in religious terms, but his epilogue, in no uncertain terms, tells the reader what to make of the Native American other.

Breckenridge’s epilogue is largely concerned with denying the claim that Native Americans have a right to the land that would prevent settlement in western territories by Euro-Americans. The following passage demonstrates the kind of cross-cultural terms used to structure otherness within the captivity narratives:

What would you think of going to a big lick, or place where the beasts collect to lick the saline and nitrous earth and water, and addressing yourself to a great buffaloe to grant you land? It is true that he could set his cloven foot to paper like the great Ottoman, the father of the Turks, who when he put his signature on an instrument, dipt his hand and spreading his fingers in the ink laid them on parchment.

In this passage, Breckenridge compares Native Americans to animals (see further information about animal imagery below) by suggesting that any right they have to the land would be akin to the right owed to a buffalo. By connecting the ludicrous image of a buffalo signing a land title to that of the Ottoman sultan signing a document with a palm-print Breckenridge denies the legitimacy of both Native American and Ottoman legal rights and procedures by casting each as fundamentally absurd.

The Breckenridge passage uses the image of the Ottoman Sultan to further denigrate the idea that Native Americans have a legal right to the land they occupy. Writers also used

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18 Dr. Knight, John Slover, and H. Breckenridge, Narratives of a Late Expedition against the Indians; with an Account of the Barbarous Execution of Col. Crawford; and the Wonderful Escape of Dr. Knight and John Slover from Captivity, in 1782 (Philadelphia: Francis Bailey, 1783).

19 Ibid.
Native American imagery to explain the North African context. In one of the less literarily florid Barbary captivity narratives, Jonathan Cowdery’s *American Captives in Tripoli*, the author includes in his story of captivity some of the cultural practices he witnessed while captive in Tripoli, including the practice of celebrating a newly announced marriage. In his words:

> Marriages are proclaimed in Tripoli, by one or two old women, who run through the streets, making a most hideous yelling, and frequently clapping their hands to their mouth, similar to the American Indians in their *pow wows.*

Cowdery depicts the Tripolitan marriage announcement as fundamentally loud, savage, and like an Indian *pow wow*. By referencing Native American practice, Cowdery uses a frame of reference readily understandable by his reading audience. As we will see in the explication below, Indian captivity narratives often included depictions of Indian ritual as fundamentally loud and hellish. It was to these kinds of descriptions that Cowdery alludes to in this passage.

On occasion, writers used the frame of reference provided by Native Americans to categorize race in North Africa. Such is the case in John Foss’s 1798 captivity narrative, where he describes the numerous races that inhabit North Africa, distinguishing between Turks, Cologies, Moors/Morescoes, and Arabs. His description of Moors in particular, describes North African racial hallmarks in terms of similar traits among Native Americans:

> generally a tall thin, spare set of people, not much inclining to fat, and a very dark complexion, much like the Indians of North America.

The textual evidence shows that, even in the earliest years of the new American republic, writers of captivity narratives understood Native Americans and the Muslim world in terms of

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20 Jonathan Cowdery, *American Captives in Tripoli, or, Dr. Cowdery's Journal in Miniature Kept During His Late Captivity in Tripoli*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Belcher & Armstrong, 1806), 33.

mutually reinforcing stereotypes. This fact alone should encourage scholars of the early American period to be far more willing to investigate structures of difference in a trans-Atlantic fashion. For it is clear that early American writers and readers understood difference in terms that were not limited to a continental perspective.

Savage Arabs

In addition to the above passages, which clearly and unambiguously use references to Indian stereotypes to refer to natives of North Africa, and vice versa, the narratives of Barbary Captivity almost universally refer to all the residents of North Africa as savages. Just as the use of universally hellish language is not simply a rhetorical device, the reference to the cultures of North Africa as savages is also more than rhetoric. Instead, the “Arabs as savages” trope does double duty – working to distinguish the supposedly inferior racial and cultural status of North African denizens from that of the Euro-American viewer/author/reader, while simultaneously connecting the newer genre of the Barbary captivity narrative both conceptually and structurally to the older more established genre of Indian captivity.

Even in the very earliest works of Barbary captivity the use of the savage Arab trope fulfills these two purposes. In Daniel Saunders’s captivity narrative, *A Journal of the Travels and Sufferings of Daniel Saunders*, published in 1794, Daniel and his crewmates are shipwrecked on the Barbary Coast.22 As they relax on shore, finishing off a pig they cooked that swam ashore

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from the ship, they are the victims of a surprise attack by a group of Arabs. Saunders uses savage language to describe the attack:

Having thus refreshed ourselves, and thinking we were pretty secure, not having seen a living creature since our landing, and being much fatigued, having had no rest the preceding night, we lay down to sleep; but to our great surprise and misfortune, about three o’clock in the afternoon, we were alarmed by eighteen savages, on camels, armed with spears, cutlasses and knives, who rushed upon us, before we were aware of them; and being in a very ordinary state of defence, we could make but a weak resistance....

Readers of the Saunders tale would undoubtedly have found the preceding passage very familiar. Stories of Indian captivity, particularly those with a female protagonist, often began with a similar scene of relaxation, feasting, and repose, albeit in a domestic setting. Similarly to the Saunders’s narrative, the victims in the tales of Indian captivity are overcome by their own savage attackers, due to surprise are unable to launch a successful counteroffensive, and therefore are taken captive. The actions of the Arabs in the desert in Saunders’s tale mirror almost directly the ambushes of “savage” Indians in the captivity narratives.

Saunders’s narrative is not the only tale of Barbary captivity that includes references to Arabs and North Africans as savages. References to Arabs as savages or barbarians occur

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23 Ibid., 20-21.

24 See for example Henry Bird, Narrative of Henry Bird Who Was Carried Away by the Indians, after the Murder of His Whole Family in 1811 (Bridgeport, CT: 1815); Mrs Johnson, A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson. Containing an Account of Her Sufferings, During Four Years with the Indians and French. Published According to Act of Congress (Walpole, NH: David Carlisle, Jr., 1796); Frederic Manheim, Affecting History of the Dreadful Distresses of Frederic Manheim's Family. To Which Are Added, the Sufferings of John Corbly's Family. An Encounter between a White Man and Two Savages. Extraordinary Bravery of a Woman. Adventures of Capt. Isaac Stewart. Deposition of Massey Herbeson. Adventures and Sufferings of Peter Wilkinson. Remarkable Adventures of Jackson Johonnot. Account of the Destruction of the Settlements at Wyoming (Philadelphia: D. Humphreys, 1794); Mary Smith, An Affecting Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mary Smith Who, with Her Husband and Three Daughters, Were Taken Prisoners by the Indians, in August Last (1814) and after Enduring the Most Cruel Hardships and Torture of Mind for Sixty Days ... Was Fortunately Rescued from the Merciless Hands of the Savages by a Detached Party from the Army of the Brave General Jackson (Providence, RI: L. Scott, 1815); A True and Wonderful Narrative of the Surprising Captivity and Remarkable Deliverance of Mrs. Frances Scott, (Boston: Ezekiel Russell, 1786).
throughout the genre. Eliza Bradley’s 1820 narrative, for example, is replete with references to Arab savagery. She describes the man who takes her captive – her “master” – in the following manner:

...the one by whom I was claimed, and who I shall hereafter distinguish by the title of Master, was in my view more savage and frightful in his appearance than any of the rest.25

She26 makes this statement before delving into a description of her master’s physical appearance. Further along in the text she again uses the savage term with reference to a general physical description of Arab men:

...Their hair is black, long and very coarse, and being clipped by the men, they leave it sticking out in every direction, from their head, which gives them a very savage appearance...27

The use of the term savage in this instance, as in most instances of the term as it occurs in the Barbary captivity narratives, directly related to physical appearance, and insofar as early American understood race in terms of physical difference, this type of construction represents a racial classification. The savageness of North Africans was not only limited to what can broadly be understood as classifications of racial difference.

The passage quoted earlier from Cowdery, where he describes the practice of announcing marriages in Tripoli, is illustrative of this point. Cowdery does not quite use the

25 Eliza Bradley, An Authentic Narrative of the Shipwreck and Sufferings of Mrs. Eliza Bradley, the Wife of Capt. James Bradley of Liverpool, Commander of the Ship Sally Which Was Wrecked on the Coast of Barbary, in June 1818 (Boston: James Walden, 1820), 20.

26 I am attributing authorship to Eliza Bradley, because the work is in the first person. It is highly likely that Bradley did not right the work, or that it entirely fictional. Paul Baepler suggests that the work is entirely fictional, see Paul Michel Baepler, White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 247. Still, for the purposes of convenience I will refer to Bradley as the author. I will similarly refer to the protagonist-as-author for other first-person texts where the authorship is in doubt.

27 Bradley, 58-59.
term “savage.” Still, his description of the announcements, accompanied by “one or two old women...making a most hideous yelling, and frequently clapping their hands to their mouth, similar to the American Indians in their pow wows,” is clearly an articulation of North African savagery. Here the “hideous yelling” and the invocation of Native American practice serve to underscore the strangeness, and ultimately the irrationality of the Tripolitan practice. The preceding analysis demonstrates that writers of captivity narratives used the term savage to indicate something more than mere unsavory behavior, nor were savage descriptions merely a useful turn of phrase. Instead authors of captivity narrative consciously used terminology to structure difference within the narratives. The savagery of the Native and North African was not simply limited to descriptions of cultural or racial difference. In fact, the savagery of the captors within these narratives extended into the realm of the religious, where writers of captivity narratives depicted Native American and North African actors as demonic figures clearly antagonistic to the will of God.

Demonic Characterization of Indian Captivity Rituals

The complimentary savageness of Arabs and Indians, served to amplify the superiority of White American identity, while simultaneously creating a literary linkage between the earlier Indian captivities and their latter counterparts which took place in North Africa. Within the Indian and Barbary captivity narratives, authors extended the metaphor of the savage Indian or North African to portray structures of difference that included both religious and racial components. Efforts to distinguish Native American and North African mannerisms as

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28 Cowdery, 33.
simultaneously racially peculiar and religiously suspect occur in passages of text that contain devilish language – references to indigenous and North African actions as wild, hellish, infernal, or generally satanic. This depiction of Native Americans and North Africans in demonic terms is more than just rhetorical, first because it is so widespread. Descriptions of Native Americans as satanic or hellish occur in almost every story of Indian captivity. Additionally, there are several instances of devilish language in reference to the North Africans in the stories of Barbary captivity.

The portrayal of racial and religious others in demonic terms is given further significance when considered against Richard Slotkin’s explication of the demonic view of Indians in the Puritan captivity narratives, it is clear that the role of devilish language in these narratives was not simply to heighten the suspense or sense of dread, but instead to characterize the Native American other as almost literally demonic and thoroughly working out a Satanic program against true believers. Furthermore, the classification of Native Americans and North Africans as demonic encouraged the developing program of dispossession and annihilation toward them. A similar process occurred in the case of Barbary narratives, undercutting the apparent reasonableness of diplomacy and encouraging a policy of direct military engagement with the Barbary powers.

Demonic and monstrous descriptions of Native American captors and their North African counterparts most often fell into two descriptive categories: those related to physical appearance, and those related to ritualistic practice. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the latter category of demonic descriptors is far more evident in Native American captivity tales. This is due to the

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29 For Slotkin’s discussion of Indians as demons in the eyes of Puritan, New England settlers see Slotkin, 100, 120, 132, 136, and passim.
fact that almost all captive-taking Native American tribes in the early American period had an elaborate ritual that attended war-making and the taking of captives. Some of the hallmarks of these rituals as described in numerous narratives include the painting of faces – perhaps to indicate which captives would be kept and which executed – the running of the gauntlet while facing physical attacks from two rows of tribesmen and women, and often an elaborate adoption ritual that welcomed the captive as a fully-fledged member of the Indian tribe, while allowing the Native family to grieve the loss of the individual being replaced. 30 The degree to which any individual narrative accurately depicted Native American captivity ritual is, of course, questionable. However, Indian captivity narratives are surprisingly unvarying in their depiction of the Native American captivity rituals.31 What is also consistent in a great many of the Indian captivity narratives is the degree to which the American captive or the narrator of the captivity tale saw Native American captivity ritual as fundamentally demonic practice.

In Susannah Willard Johnson's captivity tale, A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson, written in 1796, the author (ostensibly Johnson herself) in two separate instances describes the Native American practice of celebrating before and after significant military

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31 For examples of Native American captivity ritual found in narratives of captivity see: Knight, Slover, and Breckenridge. Johnson; Hannah Lewis, Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Hannah Lewis, and Her Three Children, Who Were Taken Prisoners by the Indians, near St. Louis, on the 25th May, 1815, and among Whom They Experienced All the Cruel Treatment Which Savage Brutality Could Inflict--Mrs. Lewis, and Her Eldest Son, Fortunately Made Their Escape on the 3d April Last, Leaving Her Two Youngest Children in the Hands of the Cruel Barbarians (Boston: Henry Trumbull, 1817); William Walton, A Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Benjamin Gilbert and His Family; Who Were Surprised by the Indians, and Taken from Their Farms, on the Frontiers of Pennsylvania, in the Spring, 1780 (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1784).
actions in devilish terms. In the first instance, she joins the Native Americans on the sixth consecutive day of marching and notes that they begin the day in this manner: “The war whoop was resounded, with an infernal yell, and we began to fix for a march.”32 And again later in the same narrative:

The war dance was again held; we were obliged to join, and sing out songs, while the Indians rent the air with infernal yelling.33

In each of these short passages the noise of the Native American ritual is not described as simply loud, unusual, chaotic or the like. Instead, the author specifically describes the actions of the Native Americans and their yelling as infernal. These short passages suggest an authorial intention to depict the Native American captors as demonic. It is not until later in narratives however, that the author makes a clear, unambiguous connection between the Native Americans, their ritual, and the demonic.

Toward the end of the narrative, the author describes a scene where a group of Native Americans and their captors return to their main village after an absence of a few weeks. The Indians great each other exuberantly. The author describes the ensuing celebration in the following terms:

The whole atmosphere soon resounded from every quarter, with whoops, yells, shrieks and screams. St. Francis [the name of the village], from the noise that came from it, might be supposed the center of Pandemonium.34

Although this statement is devoid of direct references to “hellish” or “demonic” natives, for its contemporary readers the passage provided an even stronger linkage between Native

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32 Johnson, 35.
33 Ibid., 54.
34 Ibid., 60.
American behavior and the demonic. Readers familiar with John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* would immediately recognize the reference in Johnson’s work to Pandemonium – the name given to the capital city of Hell in Milton’s epic poem. Furthermore, in Milton’s poem the demons of Hell raise a demonic hiss to welcome Satan after he returns from a successful mission tempting humanity. Pandemonium provided the author of the Johnson narrative a perfect metaphor to clearly articulate the view that the Native Americans at St. Francis were nothing more than a multitude of demons gathering to celebrate their evil deeds.\(^{35}\)

Johnson’s was not the only narrative to describe Native American rituals in demonic terms. James Smith’s captivity narrative published only a few years after the Johnson narrative also described Indian war-time celebration in demonic terms. In this narrative, a party of Indians returns, as the narrator describes it, after having defeated General Braddock’s forces on the frontier. As Smith\(^ {36}\) describes the situation:

> those that were coming in, and those that had arrived, kept a constant firing of small arms, and also the great guns in the fort, which were accompanied with the most hideous shouts and yells from all quarters; so that it appeared to me as if the infernal regions had broke loose.\(^ {37}\)

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\(^{36}\) Again, as with other captivity narratives, Smith’s ostensible authorship is suspect. However, to avoid burdensome syntax this analysis refers to Smith as the narrative’s author.

\(^{37}\) James Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith, (Now a Citizen of Bourbon County, Kentucky) During His Captivity with the Indians, in the Years 1755, ’56, ’57, ’58, &Amp; ’59, in Which the Customs, Manners, Traditions, Theological Sentiments, Mode of Warfare, Military Tactics, Discipline and Encampments, Treatment of Prisoners, &C. Are Better Explained, and More Minutely Related, Than Has Been Heretofore Done, by Any Author on That Subject. Together with a Description of the Soil, Timber and Waters, Where He Travelled with the Indians, During His Captivity. To Which Is Added, a Brief Account of Some Very Uncommon Occurrences, Which Transpired after His Return from Captivity; as Well as of the Different Campaigns Carried on against the Indians to the Westward of Fort Pitt, since the Year 1755, to the Present Date.* (Lexington, KY: John Bradford, 1799), 9.
Unlike Johnson, Smith does not directly reference the idea of Pandemonium, but the texts are surprisingly similar in their construction of Native American celebration ritual as fundamentally demonic. In both the Smith and Johnson narratives, the celebration ritual described was in itself rather bloodless – even though in each work the celebrations occurred after episodes of warfare and captive-taking. Later captivity narratives emphasized, in great and gory detail, the process by which Native Americans tortured and killed their captives.\(^{38}\) Descriptions of torture were not new to the later narratives, with even the earliest works in this period alluding to or describing in detail Native American practices of torture against their captives.\(^{39}\) By focusing on the gory details of Native American torture, writers of captivity narratives could support settlers’ conclusions that the Native Americans were unredeemable, that they could not safely coexist with white settlers, and that the ultimate solution would be further dispossession, geographic marginalization, and ultimately extermination. Native American tribes in the Ohio Valley (the setting for most of the Indian captivity narratives) witnessed a waning of their political power at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, after which and although they no longer presented the same threat they did before the war. Even still, authors of captivity tales continued to emphasize Native American bloodlust. The continuation of the trope of Indian torture is not surprising given the fact that after the war the freshly minted Americans were

\(^{38}\) Christina Snyder describes the ritual significance of Indian violence, suggesting that torturing victims served a dual purpose of avenging the death of a tribe’s own members in earlier warfare, and for testing the overall strength of an enemy by gauging how long its members could endure increasingly imaginative and violent torture. Snyder also describes the Indian process of executing captives. She does not connect this practice wholly to the idea of blood-for-blood vengeance, but suggests that Native American captors also murdered individuals if they were injured, too young, or otherwise not useful. See Snyder, 80-100.

\(^{39}\) See for example: Jackson Johonnet, *The Remarkable Adventures of Jackson Johonnet, of Massachusetts; Who Served as a Soldier in the Western Army, in the Massachusetts Line, in the Expedition under General Harmar, and the Unfortunate General St. Clair. Containing an Account of His Capitivity, Sufferings, and Escape from the Kickapoo Indians. Written by Himself, and Published at the Earnest Importunity of His Friends, for the Benefit of American Youth* (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1793); Knight, Slover, and Breckenridge; Manheim.
even more eager to settle westward territories than the British colonists of only a generation before. Indeed, the colonists, even when (largely happily) part of the British Empire, resented moves – such as the Proclamation line of 1763 – to prevent their settlement in western territories.⁴⁰ Seen in this context, authors of captivity narratives emphasized the danger of an Indian “threat” less pronounced than in the pre-Revolutionary period, emphasizing the apparent inability of settlers and Indians to coexist.⁴¹

It is difficult to draw a bright line directly from land hunger to descriptions of torture in the Indian captivity narratives. Still, the formula for handling Indian torture within the narrative is so overarchingly similar that it suggests wider processes at work. In almost every case where captivity narratives describe torture in detail, the works emphasize as well the hellish and demonic nature of the Indians activities against the settlers. This depiction is not accidental, or merely representative of a literary mood that privileged sentimental portrayals of tragedy. Instead, the deliberate depiction of Indians as demonic torturers ultimately served the interests of a nation that did not want to pursue a policy of diplomacy or negotiation, but instead saw the Native Americas as an intractable problem whose only solution lay in emptying the land of their presence.


The Manheim narrative contains perhaps the best example of Indian torture and attendant demonic language used in a manner that suggests a propagandistic purpose. In this narrative, published in 1794, hostile Indians capture the entire Manheim family. The Manheim’s have twin daughters named Christina and Maria. Beyond the religious significance of their names, the girls are also important because they are only twelve years old. Symbolically, the daughters represent both the larger community of Christian, American settlers, and by their youth represent the promise the country holds for the younger generations. The fate of the daughters, therefore, is very significant. A dispute arises as to who among the Indians will own each of the two girls, and to settle the dispute the Indians decide to kill both of the captives by burning them alive.42 The narrative describes the episode in length and in detail:

At length, with countenances distorted by infernal fury, and with hideous yells, the two savages who had captured the hapless Maria and Christina, leaped into the midst of their circle, and dragged those ill-fated maidens, shrieking, from the embraces of their companions. These warriors disagreed about whose property the girls should be, as they had jointly seized them; and, to terminate the dispute, agreeable to the abominable usage of the savages, it was determined by the chiefs of the party, that the prisoners...should be destroyed; and that their captors should be the principal agents in the execrable business.43

The captors then tie the girls to saplings, and pierce their bodies with sharpened wooden spears dipped in turpentine:

These furies assisted by their comrades, stripped the forlorn girls...and tied each to a sapling...[piercing the girls] with upwards of six hundred of the sharpened splinters...And then to complete the infernal tragedy, the splinters, all standing erect on the bleeding

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42 Interestingly, the solution arrived at by the Indians reminds the reader of Solomon’s ruling to sever a baby in half for two women who could not agree on who would raise the child. Unlike the biblical story, which magnified Solomon’s wisdom, the Indians in this case are depicted as fundamentally savage, cruel, and simultaneously irrational.

43 Manheim, 6.
victims, were every one set on fire, and exhibited a scene of monstrous misery, beyond the power of speech to describe...44

Demonic language suffuses the description of the girls’ torture and murder. The author first describes the Indians’ “infernal fury” and diabolical plan to kill the girls. The plan itself is abominable and the narrative refers to the principal executioners as furies. Even the manner in which they grab the young women reminds the reader of satanic demons dragging the damned to their fate.45

Other narratives also describe Native American torture and executions using demonic language. The Philip M’Donald captivity narrative, published in 1786, describes the burning of captive’s feet in the following manner:

...the infernal savages brought fire and placed under their feet, burning them by degrees till their entrails dropped into the fire.46

James Smith’s 1799 captivity tale includes a rather similar depiction of Indian torture and execution. Smith is a captive with a party of Native Americans, when another groups of Indians returns with a number of new captives. As Smith describes the scene:

About sun down I beheld a small party coming in with about a dozen prisoners, stripped naked; with their hands tied behind their backs, and their faces, and part of their bodies blacked – these prisoners they burned to death on the bank of the Alegheny river opposite the fort. I stood on the fort wall until I beheld them begin to burn one of these men, they had him tied to a stake and kept touching him with fire-brands, red-hot irons &c. and he screaming in a most doleful manner, - the Indians in the mean time yelling

44 Ibid.
45 The erotic language of this torture scene would not have escaped the notice of contemporary readers. The next chapter explores the eroticism implicit in captivity.
46 Philip M’Donald, A Surprising Account, of the Captivity and Escape of Philip M’donald, and Alexander M’lead, of Virginia. From the Chickemogga Indians, and of Their Great Discoveries in the Western World. From June 1779, to January 1786, When They Returned in Health to Their Friends, After an Absence of Six Years and a Half. Written by Themselves (Bennington, VT: Haswell & Russell, 1786), 7.
like infernal spirits. As this scene appeared too shocking for me to behold, I retired to my lodging both sore and sorry.  

Smith’s narrative, unlike some of the latter captivity tales, is notable because of its generally low key prose and lack of sensational language. However, even in this rather staid work, the author makes a connection between the Indian practice of burning their captives and the demonic. The author also compares the Native Americans war cries to the yelling of devils in hell.

By the first and second decades of the nineteenth century the treatment of torture within the narratives changed slightly. Although demonic characterizations of Indians remained a continuous thread connecting these tales to the earlier ones, the latter narratives evince a strong sentimentalism, and seek to elicit a deeply emotional response from the reader. Even with the added varnish of emotional language, the narratives never fail to characterize Native Americans and their execution ritual as demonic. Mary Smith’s captivity narrative, published in 1815, demonstrates the highly emotive language of sentimental literature. In the following scene, Mary Smith’s husband has lost so much blood from the initial Indian attack that he is unable to continue marching with the other captives. The captors then try to beat him into

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47 James Smith, An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith, (Now a Citizen of Bourbon County, Kentucky) During His Captivity with the Indians, in the Years 1755, ’56, ’57, ’58, & ’59 in Which the Customs, Manners, Traditions, Theological Sentiments, Mode of Warfare, Military Tactics, Discipline and Encampments, Treatment of Prisoners, &C. Are Better Explained, and More Minutely Related, Than Has Been Heretofore Done, by Any Author on That Subject. Together with a Description of the Soil, Timber and Waters, Where He Travelled with the Indians, During His Captivity.: To Which Is Added, a Brief Account of Some Very Uncommon Occurrences, Which Transpired after His Return from Captivity; as Well as of the Different Campaigns Carried on against the Indians to the Westward of Fort Pitt, since the Year 1755, to the Present Date (Lexington, KY: John Bradford, 1799), 9.

walking quicker, which does not work, so they determine to tie him up and proceed to torture him to death:

Finding, however, that their hellish proceedings had no other effect than to render the poor unhappy sufferer less enabled to travel, they formed the horrid conclusion of putting him to a painful death; and in order to execute the infernal purpose, they stripped and prostrated the wretched victim on his naked back, they then cut holes through his wrists and ankles, between the bones and tendons, in such a manner as to draw green withes through the apertures! Then extending his arms and legs to a degree exquisitely painful, they, with the ligatures above mentioned, lashed him fast to four small trees, about six feet from the ground; which bloody employ finished these horrid hell hounds left for a few moments the writhing sacrifice, with an intent to make merry and enjoy...the excruciating tortures of the sufferer!49

Like earlier passages of Indian torture, this passage, too is suffused with descriptions of Native American actions as demonic and hellish. The passage clearly demonstrates the influence of sentimental literature on the captivity narrative. The increased focus on emotion and melodrama within the Indian captivity narrative – a clear influence from the wider mood of sentimental literature – was not limited solely to Mary Smith’s narrative, and can be seen in other work from this time period.

Published in the same year and featuring a similar sentimentality and obsession with graphic detail of Native American torture, Eliza Swan’s narrative of captivity also does not fail, within its emotional accounting of Indian violence, to maintain the fundamental image of the Native actor as a demonic figure. This particular scene of torture occurs as Swan travels with her child and a Frenchman who was also a captive of the Indians. Toward the end of a day of marching they come to a wide river, where her captors begin to make ready some canoes to

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49 Smith, An Affecting Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mary Smith Who, with Her Husband and Three Daughters, Were Taken Prisoners by the Indians, in August Last (1814) and after Enduring the Most Cruel Hardships and Torture of Mind for Sixty Days ... Was Fortunately Rescued from the Merciless Hands of the Savages by a Detached Party from the Army of the Brave General Jackson, 11-12.
take them over the water. Here they encounter another party of the same tribe of Indians who were also conducting raids along the frontier. Apparently the second party of Indians have lost some of their members in battle and demand a compensatory sacrifice of one of the captives. Luckily for Swan, the chosen victim is the Frenchman. The passage deserves quotation at length, to demonstrate the manner in which demonic language is woven into the sentimental fabric of the narrative:

> ....A scene of horror infinitely greater than had ever met my eyes before, was now preparing. It was determined to roast the wretched captive alive!...They accompanied their labors, as if for his funeral dirge, with screams and sounds inimitable but by savage voices. Then they set the piles on fire and the blaze ran fiercely round the circle, which soon reached the wretched captive, whose screeches and dying groans were such as would pierce the heart of any but cannibals! This sight...afforded the highest diversion to his inhuman tormentors, who demonstrated...their joy by correspondent yells, dances and gesticulations. The savages continued their powwas and hellish orgies until the fire had nearly wholly consumed the body of their victim! 50

Like the preceding passage from Smith’s narrative, this passage displays a far more distinctive emotional pitch than earlier narratives. Taken together, the underlying thread tying all these narratives together is the manner in which the texts continuously describe Native Americans and their rituals in distinctly demonic and hellish terms.

By structuring Native American ritual as fundamentally demonic – even when that ritual was not the understandably horrific instance of human execution – the Indian captivity narratives create a dichotomy between the hellish Native American captors and their saintly, American captives. The process of othering premised on demonic characterizations extended beyond descriptions of Indian ritual, and involved also the connection of Indian physical

50 Eliza Swan, *An Affecting Account of the Tragical Death of Major Swan, and of the Captivity of Mrs. Swan and Infant Child, by the Savages, in April Last--(1815.) This Unfortunate Lady and Her Little Son Were Taken Prisoners by the Indians, at a Small Village near St. Louis, and Conveyed near 700 Miles through an Uncivilized Wilderness, Where They Were Fortunately Redeemed by a Spanish Trader, in July Last.* (Boston: Henry Trumbull, 1815), 8.
description to the demonic. The demonic characterization of physical appearance – unlike the classification of ritual – was not limited only to the North American context of Indian captivity. Instead, captivities of Americans taken in the North African context also exhibited characterizations of North African Arab and Moorish physical appearance that connected them to the demonic.

Physical Appearance as a Manifestation of the Demonic in Indian and Barbary Narratives

The structuring of Native American ritual as demonic within the texts works to deny the legitimacy of Native American religious practice and argues for the corollary superiority of white, American Protestantism. The demonic characterization of Native American and North African physical appearance, on the other hand, valorizes whiteness. Although the narratives do not go so far as to specifically mention the superiority of white skin, the dichotomy is strongly implicated in the structure of the texts. Race here, as a marker of difference, suggests who does and does not belong. Perhaps no clearer demarcation could be made between the believing, white Christian captive and the demonic, non-believing, non-white captor.

Demonic references to physical appearance are often fleeting, but taken across multiple narratives they suggest a common connection among the authors and, by extension, the narratives’ readership that constructs a barrier of exclusion based on racial difference. For the time period of this study, one of the earliest references to demonic appearance occurs in the Knight Indian captivity narrative. Here, the narrator describes his encounter with a Native American woman in the following terms:
An old squaw (whose appearance every way answered the ideas people entertain of the Devil) got a board, took a parcel of coals and ashes and laid them on his back and head after he had been scalped.\textsuperscript{51}

Here, although the context is one of Native American ritual cruelty, the demonic description is tied not to the actions of the Native American woman, but to her appearance. Apart from anything she does, she is, by sheer physical aspect, a demonic figure. Later in the same narrative, Breckenridge, in his publisher’s conclusion, references race and the demonic when discussing the absurdity of making treaties over land with the Native Americans:

With regard to forming treaties or making peace with this race, these are my ideas: They have the shapes of men, and may be of the human species, but certainly in their present state they approach nearer the character of Devils: take an Indian. Is there any faith in him? Can you bind him by favours?\textsuperscript{52}

Here Breckenridge begrudgingly acknowledges the common humanity of the Native Americans, but in the same passage he qualifies that identity by stating that they are, essentially only devils. Breckenridge’s statement also illustrates the way that racial qualification presupposes the dispossession of Native lands and ultimately plays into the politics of westward expansion. By denying the humanity of the Native Americans, Breckenridge denies the possibility of political accommodation with them.

Within the narratives of Barbary captivity, the residents of North Africa are repeatedly referred to in demonic terms – either described directly as demons or obliquely as monsters. Here too, the rhetoric operates as a structure of essentially racial difference. It is the physical appearance of the North Africans that determines their difference, and ultimately, their alienation from the normative aesthetic of the white American captive. This type of

\textsuperscript{51} Knight, Slover, and Breckenridge, 13.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 36.
characterization appears fully formed in one of the earliest Barbary narratives, suggesting that this way of seeing the other was adapted from the Indian captivity narratives. In John Foss’s narrative, published in 1798, he describes the Turks he encounters as a:

well built robust people, their complexion not unlike Americans, tho’ somewhat larger, but their dress, and long beards, make them appear more like monster, than human beings.\textsuperscript{53}

Foss’s description of the Turk is somewhat problematic for the reader. Foss describes the skin color of the Turk as very close to an American, a similarity he deflects by further qualifying the Turks racially and physically by stating that their entire aspect makes them “appear more like monster, than human beings.” By this device, Foss transforms the essential relationship of racial parity between Turks and the Americans into one that is clearly and unambiguously dichotomous. Additionally, while this language does not define the Turk as satanic, per se, the monstrous imagery in the text articulates a clear difference between normative, American whiteness and the appearance of the North African other.

The captivity tale of Maria Martin includes similar articulations describing North Africans as monstrous. This captivity narrative, published in 1811, ostensibly tells the story of an English woman who, along with her husband and other members of the ship’s crew and passengers, is shipwrecked on the Barbary coast “30 miles from Teniz, and 90 miles from the city of Algiers.”\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{53} John Foss, \textit{A Journal, of the Captivity and Sufferings of John Foss; Several Years a Prisoner at Algiers: Together with Some Account of the Treatment of Christian Slaves When Sick:-- and Observations of the Manners and Customs of the Algerines}, 2nd ed. (Newburyport, MA: Angier March, 1798), 46.

\textsuperscript{54} Maria Martin, \textit{History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin Who Was Six Years a Slave in Algiers, Two of Which She Was Confined in a Dismal Dungeon, Loaded with Irons, by the Command of an Inhuman Turkish Officer Written by Herself to Which Is Added, a History of Algiers, with the Manners and Customs of the People} (Trenton: James Oram, 1811), 13. On its face, this does not appear to be an American captivity narrative, but instead a British one. However, Paul Baerler’s investigations into the publication history of the narrative shows conclusively that no European edition of the work was ever published, and that it is highly probable that the work was an American reinvention of an earlier tale (also exclusively published in America) that told a similar story of an
After landing ashore and walking southward in search of food and water, the party of survivors is taken prisoner by a party of Moors they happen to encounter in the desert. These Moors take them captive, and eventually sell Martin on to a Turkish master who another British captive describes to her in the following terms:

That he was a blood-thirsty, cruel and inhuman monster, who to his knowledge, had put several slaves to death for no greater fault than that of complaining of indisposition, and an inability to perform their daily tasks.55

This passage continues the theme of North Africans as fundamentally, and monstrously different. Additionally, the passage suggests another trope, common throughout European and American literature focusing on the Near East and the Orient – that of the Oriental Despot. The Turkish master is not a rational, enlightened slave-owner, but instead his decision making is informed more by emotional caprice. Combining the trope of the Oriental Despot with language emphasizing the Turk’s monstrosity, creates a two-tiered structure of difference that again only reinforces the literal and metaphorical distance of North Africa and its denizens from the narrative’s normative framework – in this case enlightened republicanism of America.

Later in the same narrative, Martin again refers to her captors as monsters. The scene, taken as a whole, structures North African culture as fundamentally savage, alien, and irrational. The context is the execution of a captive owned by a judge (called a cadi in the narrative, a reference to the Arabic qadi) who had attempted an unsuccessful escape “by

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55 Martin, 30.
swimming to one of the enemy’s boats, but was observed, pursued and retaken.” 56 All of the captives are told to assemble as “it is ever customary for the captives to attend, generally, that they may be eye witnesses to those scenes of savage torture, inflicted by the barbarians on such that attempt escape.” 57 In a practice similar to that in the Indian captivity narratives, the doomed man’s body is painted in black which, according to the narrator “they do to prevent Christians gaining admission among the saints of Mahomet, as they persuade their master that with the body, the soul is also colored!” 58 The condemned man is then brought to a machine described as a mill which worked to “cut the wretched victim into as small pieces as one’s little finger.” 59 Ultimately the man is put through the machine with the desired effect and:

> When these savage monsters had sufficiently glutted themselves with the blood of their victim, orders were given for the re-forming of the procession, which was immediately done...my master riding in front brandishing his cimeter [sic], the point of which the callous hearted wretch had taken the pains to stain with the blood of the murdered captive, as a token of triumph. 60

Martin’s description of the entire sequence of execution reminds the reader of the extended torture scenes in the Indian captivity narratives. Additionally, the language employed to describe the execution is highly sentimental and emotionally evocative. Even still, the overall focus of the scene is to categorize the North African captors as fundamentally savage, and spiritually irrational.

Monstrous characterizations of the North African other continued even into the latter narratives. Published in 1820 the Barbary captivity narrative of Eliza Bradley is very similar in

56 Ibid., 36.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 38.
59 Ibid., 37.
60 Ibid., 39.
some respects to that of Maria Martin. Like Martin, Bradley encounters a party of North Africans after her ship wrecks on the Barbary Coast. The North Africans capture her, her husband, and the ship’s crew. After her initial capture, Bradley makes the following assessment of her captors:

Such indeed as had been represented by my husband, was the situation of these victims of misfortune...consigned, without any human assistance, into the hands of merciless barbarians. These ferocious monsters, whenever they uttered a murmur, appeared so enraged against them, that when they spoke to them the fire flashed from their eyes, and the whites, so perceptible in the Moors and Arabs, could not be distinguished...61

Although the passage confusingly refers to both the captors and the captives in the third person, while the rest of the narrative is narrated by Bradley in the first person, the passage traffics in familiar stereotypes of the North African captors. Here the humanity of the captors is specifically denied, as the passage contrasts the captives wish for “human assistance” to their present state of captivity to “merciless barbarians.” Furthermore, the passage also deploys familiar monstrous language to further clarify North African difference.

The texts above clearly demonstrate that within both Indian and Barbary captivity narratives structures of differences depend on broad-based categorizations of Native Americans and North Africans as demonic and monstrous. These characterizations do not focus mainly on the savage nature of ritual, but instead descriptions of difference turn on the savage, brutal, demonic and monstrous nature of Native Americans and North Africans as an intrinsic aspect of their physical appearance, and ultimately, their identity. By classifying North Africans and Native Americans as intrinsically demonic and savage, the narratives succeed in valorizing the normative identity privileged by the texts – that of white, Protestant Americans.

61Bradley, 39.
Related to the demonic and monstrous characterizations of Native Americans and North Africans is another set of corollary images that also serve to deny the captors status as equivalent human beings. This class of rhetoric describes the Native or North African not as a literal or figurative demon, but instead compares the captors, in rather uncharitable terms, to animals. Like the satanic imagery, comparisons to animals further exclude Native Americans and North Africans from the White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant in-group which the captivity narratives help to define.

Native Americans and North Africans as Metaphorical Animals

Metaphorical references to the animal nature of the captors occur in both Native American and North African captivity narratives. Breckenridge’s addendum to Knight’s narrative, which, like the ministers’ sermons appended to Puritan captivity narratives, underscores the lessons to be taken from the work, offers an embarrassment of riches in this regard. He begins his short conclusion to the larger work with this statement: “With the narrative enclosed, I subjoin some observations with regard to the animals, vulgarly called the Indians.”62 With this opening riposte, Breckenridge continues a diatribe against the Native Americans and their right to the land, mostly through language that compares them directly to animals. In denying the Indians’ right to the land he describes the practice of Native American facial modification by describing his archetypal Indian as “a wild Indian with his ears cut in ringlets, or his nose slit like a swine or a malefactor.”63 By this time Breckenridge appears to be

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62 Knight, Slover, and Breckenridge, 31.
63 Ibid., 32.
hitting his stride, and goes on further, in a passage that suggests Native Americans have no right to North American territory because they have not improved the land. He asks: “What use do these ring streaked, spotted, and speckled cattle make of the soil? Do they till it?...Warburton has well said, that before you can make an Indian a Christian you must teach him agriculture and reduce him to a civilized life.”

Breckenridge’s entire essay attempts to refute Native claims to the land through an ostensibly reasoned legal analysis that is essentially a diatribe against Native American humanity. Breckenridge denies Native American sovereignty through a series of comparisons that essentially classify the Native as Animal and subhuman. Perhaps better than any other captivity narrative, Breckenridge’s conclusion to the Knight narrative most clearly ties processes of othering and the denial of indigenous humanity, to the valorization of white normativity. By extension, Breckenridge’s conclusion also justifies a policy of land dispossession in relation to the Indian occupation of westward territories.

The Knight narrative is not the only Indian captivity narrative to include references to Indians as animals. The narrative of Mrs. Susannah Willard Johnson, published in 1796, also metaphorically connects Native Americans to animals. After a day of marching with her captors through the wilderness, they all encamp for the night. Johnson describes the approaching hour of slumber stating “it would be improper to call it bedtime, where beds were not, I was pointed to a platform, raised half a yard” where she was meant to sleep. Clearly, this type of accommodation was unfamiliar to Johnson, but not to her Indian captives who she describes, thus:

64 Ibid., 35.
The Indians threw themselves down, in various parts of the building, in a manner more resembling cows in a shed, than human beings in a house.65

Although Johnson’s rhetoric is not employed, as is Breckenridge’s, in an attempt to justify dispossessing the Native Americans of their land, by connecting the Indians’ living conditions to those of animals, the text structures the Native American way of living as fundamentally antithetical and in opposition to American ways of occupying the land.

Interestingly, Matthew Bunn’s narrative, published in 1796, also connects animal descriptions of Native Americans to their occupation of the land. Bunn, travelling as a captive with the Indians, reaches their village, and witnesses the welcome the Indians receive from the villager. Bunn describes the Indians as they emerge from the forest village, comparing them to squirrels: “And immediately the savages came running to meet us as thick as squirrels in the woods.”66 Like Johnson and Breckenridge, Bunn ties the animal description of the Native Americans to the manner in which they occupy the land. The Indians do not simply emerge from their village, as settlers would emerge from their homes within a small town. Instead, they emerge from the forest as if they too were simply creatures of the wilderness, more animal than human, and seemingly overpowering in their numbers.

Descriptions of the other as animal were not limited to the Indian captivity narratives, and appeared as well in captivity tales set on the Barbary Coast. Authors of Barbary captivity narratives used animal descriptions to structure difference even in the earliest Barbary captivity

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65 Along with the preceding excerpt, Johnson, 64.

66 Matthew Bunn, A Journal of the Adventures of Matthew Bunn, a Native of Brookfield, Massachusetts, Who Enlisted with Ensign John Tillinghast, of Providence, in the Year 1791, on an Expedition into the Western Country,-- Was Taken by the Savages, and Made His Escape into Detroit the 30th of April, 1792. Containing a Very Circumstantial Account of the Cruel Treatment He Suffered While in Captivity, and Many of the Customs of the Savages, Which Have Never before Appeared in Print. Published by the Particular Request of a Number of Persons Who Have Seen the Manuscript (Providence, RI: Bennett Wheeler, 1796), 9.
narratives. For example, the second edition of John Foss’s 1798 narrative describes Foss’s ship being overtaken by the North African privateers who “then came on deck, like a parcel of ravenous wolves, and stripped the cloathes off our backs.”\(^{67}\) This characterization of the privateers as wolves is an enhancement of the text found in the second edition, published shortly after the first. In his preface to the second edition, Foss indicates that the popularity of the first volume encouraged him to publish a modified version where

Various errors in the former edition are corrected – and large additions made, with such improvements as must render the work more extensively useful, as well as entertaining to readers of all classes.\(^{68}\)

One conspicuous enhancement found throughout the work is the addition of short passages that essentially highlight the savagery and difference of the North Africans. The reference above to the privateers as a parcel of wolves, is in line with other such edits found throughout the second edition. The introduction to the second edition explains these sensational appositive, which the narrative’s author added to achieve the goal of reading a broader audience and entertaining “readers of all classes.” It is telling that Foss (or his publishers) felt that, in order to have the work appreciated by a broader audience, the narrative’s text needed to articulate the difference between the captors and captives in more vociferous terms.

In addition to Foss’s narrative, animal descriptions of North Africans exist in other narratives as well. Roberts Adams, another shipwrecked captive, describes his visit to Timbuktu (Tombuctoo, in his narrative) in his tale, published in 1817. Upon reaching the city, the Moors who have captured Adams and taken him into captivity are themselves arrested by the King of

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\(^{67}\) Foss, A Journal, of the Captivity and Sufferings of John Foss; Several Years a Prisoner at Algiers: Together with Some Account of the Treatment of Christian Slaves When Sick:-- and Observations of the Manners and Customs of the Algerines, 10.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 5.
Timbuktu, and the King keeps Adams and another captive in relative comfort in the city. This reprieve from captivity allows Adams to observe the residents of the city, particularly the royal court. The Adams narrative is a third person account, the author explaining that he gathered facts by interviewing the captive himself. In certain instances, the author uses direct quotations from the captive to emphasize particular points and, perhaps, to show the veracity of the statements provided. One such instance of direct quotation occurs when Adams describes the Queen of Timbuctoo. He notes that “she wore no shoes; and, in consequence, her feet appeared to be as hard and dry ‘as the hoofs of an ass’”. The use of the direct quotation enhances the significance and apparent truthfulness of Adams’s.

The best example of animal imagery found in the Barbary narratives occurs in a latter narrative, that of Eliza Bradley, published in 1820. Bradley’s narrative, already noted above for its references to monstrous North Africans, also includes a long passage describing the physical appearance of her master, who was:  

...In my view more savage and frightful in appearance, than any of the rest. He was about six feet in height, of a tawny complexion, and had not other clothing than a piece of woolen cloth wrapped around his body, and which extended from below his breast to his knees; his hair was stout and bushy, and stuck up in every direction like the bristles upon the back of a hog; his eyes were small but were red and fiery, resembling those of a serpent when irritated; and to add to his horrid appearance, his beard (which was of a jet black and curly) was more than a foot in length! Such I assure the reader is a true description of the monster, in human shape, by whom I was doomed to be held in servitude...  

In Bradley’s tale, the narrator (ostensibly Bradley herself) cannot resist comparing, in two separate instances, her master to an animal. First, his hair resembles a hog – surely an analogy

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69 The initial captors, according to several different Barbary narratives, would often take their captives from the initial point of capture to markets inland, selling them on to masters who would have them. A similar process occurred in North American captivity, as well.

70 Bradley, 20.
that would not sit well with her Muslim master. Second, when angered his eyes remind her of a snake. Finally, she concludes by referring to him as a literal monster, thereby connecting the rhetoric of demonic and monstrous language to an animal description of the North African other.

Taken as a whole, the language of difference within both Barbary and Indian captivity narratives do not privilege either a racial or religious understanding of difference. Instead, by using Demonic, monstrous, and animal language, the writers of captivity narratives structure difference in religious terms, as well as in terms premised entirely on physical appearance. By emphasizing this difference, the writers of captivity narratives underscore the superiority of white, American, Protestant culture. Particularly in the case of the Knight narrative, Breckenridge’s conclusion to the work specifically uses articulations of Native American difference – in this case representing the Native Americans as no better than animals – to argue for the ultimate dispossession and removal of the Indian from westward territories. It cannot be argued that in all cases, the structures of difference built around demonic, monstrous, and animal depictions of the Native American or North African other were tied to equivalent calls for violence or dispossession of each particular group, because in most cases the logic at work is more subtle. By structuring Native Americans and North Africans as fundamentally different – as demons, monsters, or dumb animals – the writers of captivity narratives ultimately fulfill their goal of dehumanizing the native/other, while valorizing the qualities of white, normative, American culture.

The language of the captivity narratives works to structure a dichotomy between a white, American, and Protestant “us,” and a racially and religiously compromised “other.”
Within each work the authors are careful to police the boundaries between “us” and “them.” That is not to say that the barrier between cultures is impermeable. The captivity narratives contain episodes where individuals have willfully crossed cultural boundaries from white normativity to join the other. Authors of captivity texts reserved special scorn for these individuals – known collectively by the label renegade. The texts structure these individuals as even worse than the Indians which they have chosen to live among.

The Problem of the Renegade

In all of the extant narratives of Indian and Barbary captivity consulted in this study, not one of the works included an instance where the main character crosses cultural boundaries of race or religion. Even in the narrative of Mary Smith, where the character comes closest to giving up her native culture, Smith herself chooses the possibility of death by attempting to escape, instead of facing the inevitability of sexual transculturation at the hands of and old sachem. Although captivity narratives bar transculturation as a viable option for protagonists neither set of narratives entirely precludes transculturation by renegadism as an option for subordinate characters. Inevitably, because boundaries of race, sex, and culture are so carefully delineated within the narratives, instances of this kind of culture-crossing are incredibly problematic. The narratives solve the problem of the renegade by universally heaping upon the renegade unreserved scorn. In fact, in those narratives where renegades appear, the text describes them as more despicable than the Natives or North Africans with which they have chosen to live.
Both the Knight narrative, and the captivity tale of Matthew Bunn mention the Girty brothers. Simon Girty, and his two brothers George and James were notorious figures of the Revolutionary frontier, with Simon in particular being “feared and hated by frontiersmen, who abhorred his Indian manners and the Native American style of warfare.”\(^{71}\) The Girty’s upbringing as childhood captives contributed to the degree of mistrust they faced from frontier settlers. According to Helen Tanner, Indians captured all of the brothers in 1756, when the eldest brother (Simon) was only thirteen, and the youngest (George) only 9. For three years Simon, James, and George lived with the Seneca, Shawnee, and the Delaware tribes, respectively.\(^{72}\) The Girty’s operated as double-crossers during the Revolutionary War, because after initially supporting the American cause, they fought alongside the Indians as allies of the British. The Knight narrative, published in 1783, includes references to Simon Girty, while the Bunn narrative, from 1796, makes reference to the youngest Girty brother, George.

In Knight’s narrative, Simon Girty is initially a character that the captives think might be able to help them. However, Girty reveals himself to be a villain with his rough treatment and angry words directed toward the captives. Girty interrogates Dr. Knight, the narrative’s protagonist, asking him if he was a doctor. Knight replies:

I told him, yes, and went toward him reaching out my hand, but he bid me begone and called me a damn’d rascal, upon which the fellow who had me in charge pulled me along.\(^{73}\)


\(^{73}\) Knight, Slover, and Breckenridge, 10.
Girty’s anger appears out of the blue, and in context of the scene seems highly irrational, and ultimately uncivilized. To the contemporary reader, Girty’s rebuffing of Dr. Knight’s friendly welcome would only underscore his status as a questionable, and indeed savage individual. Apart from this initial, strange encounter, Girty continues to show malevolence toward Dr Knight and the fellow captives.

Girtly looks on, unmoved, as the Indians torture and burn one of Knight’s fellow captives. The man, called “the Colonel” in the narrative, is determined to bear the torture with manly fortitude, even as the Indians relish piercing and burning his body:

...called to Simon Girty and begged him to shoot him; but Girty making no answer he called him again. Girty then, by way of derision, told the colonel he had no gun, at the same time turning about to an Indian who was behind him, laughed heartily, and by all his gestures seemed delighted at the horrid scene.74

Here Girty appears as unfeeling and cruel as any Native viewer of captive torture. His enjoyment in the scene mirrors similar depictions of Indian captors reveling in the torture and execution of their captives. Here the distinction between Girty and any other Indian is blurred.

In John Slover’s narrative, published with Dr. Knight’s narrative in the same volume, the author explains the connection between George Girty and the American cause in a footnote that describes Girty and another renegade. The footnoted description of the two renegades makes use of the same kind of demonic language used to describe Native Americans more generally (as discussed above):

These men, Elliot and Girty, were inhabitants of the western country and since the commencement of the war, having for some time possessed an attachment to America,

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74 Ibid., 11-12.
went off to the Indians. They are of that horrid brood called Refugees, and whom the Devil has long since marked for his own property.75

It is difficult to disentangle the processes at work here. Girty and Elliot – another renegade – are clearly described in demonic terms similar to the Native Americans whose cause and culture they have joined. However, the narrative reserves special scorn for Girty and Elliot as renegades, because they have willfully given up their own racial and religious culture to join another, inferior culture.

The Girty’s do not show up only in the Knight and Slover narratives, but appear as well in the narrative of Matthew Bunn, published in 1796. It is George Girty who makes an appearance in this narrative and, although he is by no means a laudable character, he is not described in the kind of unsparingly negative language seen in the Knight and Slover narratives. One facet that is particularly interesting in this narrative is the interrogation Girty makes of Bunn when the latter tries and fails to escape. Girty asks Bunn a series of questions, and with every reply Bunn gives, Girty calls him a liar. Although the narrative itself does not editorialize on the episode, the image of the double-crossing renegade interrogating the pro-Revolutionary American as to what was truthful, must surely have struck contemporary readers as a bit rich.76

The derision and scorn piled on figures who “went native” in the North American wilderness was mirrored by a similar disdain shown to those individuals who “turned Turk,” adopted Islam, and became part of the North African culture. The best example of this kind of castigation occurs in Thomas Nicholson’s narrative of captivity on the Barbary Coast, published

75 The author of this footnote refers to Girty and Elliot as “Refugees,” even as he is clearly castigating their status as renegades. The author may be using an archaic sense of the word refugee, to mean they were refugees from justice. Ibid., 23.

76 Bunn, 18-20.
in 1816. In this narrative, Nicholson attempts to escape from his new Algerian masters. Sadly, he is caught during the failed attempt at freedom, and is placed in a lonely cell all on his own, and is forced to wear a large wooden yoke at all times to prevent him from attempting another escape. While kept in a cell alone, Nicholson’s only visitor is “a renegade Turk”:

Whose business it was to bury the dead – for several weeks he did not fail to call each day with his grave digging implements, expecting no doubt to find me dead – he indeed appeared so anxious to perform this last office for me, that on his entrance and finding that the breath of life had not yet become quite extinct, he would apparently in a rage toss me over with his spade, and after bestowing upon me a few of his Turkish epithets, he would quit me.77

Nicholson is so distraught over his condition and his continued treatment at the hands of this renegade that he begged the man to kill him: “I found my intreaties availed nothing with this flint hearted monster, who seemed pleased rather to increase than diminish my torments.”78

The depiction in this passage of the renegade Turk hovering over Nicholson like some kind of human vulture is rather emotive. Beyond the description of the renegade as a profoundly unsavory character, he is also a figure of irrational cruelty. Surely if he wanted only to bury Nicholson and thus earn his day’s wages for burying the dead, he would readily accede to Nicholson’s requests that he should kill him. However, the passage suggests that it is the renegade’s innate evil and sense of cruelty that prevents him from doing what makes sense, and instead he must relish the punishment he is able to give to Nicholson.

Significantly, just as the Girty brothers are described in the kind of demonic terms that are associated more broadly with the Native Americans in the tales of Indian captivity, the

77 Thomas Nicholson, An Affecting Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Thomas Nicholson Who Has Been Six Years a Prisoner among the Algerines to Which Is Added a Concise Description of Algiers and Some Particulars of Com. Decatur’s Late Expedition (Boston: H. Trumbull, 1816), 11.
78 Ibid.
renegade Turk here is described using the same monstrous language (explored above) that was also used in the narratives to describe the inherent awfulness of the non-renegade Turks. The explication of the Girty’s as demonic and the renegade Turk as monstrous is not accidental. The authors within each narrative are rhetorically connecting each renegade to the community which they have chosen as their own. Furthermore, by connecting renegades, through monstrous and demonic association, to the North Africans and Native Americans, the writers of the captivity narratives are drawing a clear boundary of belonging. Even though the circumscribed borders of identity were permeable enough to permit a white man to “turn Turk” or “Go Native,” a reverse osmosis across the membrane of identity was not practicable. The narratives suggest that once a person willfully qualified their white, American, and Protestant identity for something else (something inferior in the language of the narratives) that change stuck.

A close reading of Indian and Barbary captivity narratives clearly demonstrates a process at work whereby White, Protestant and American normativity is structured using a distinct rhetoric of exclusion (demonic and monstrous language, the description of the other in animal terms, and the denigration of the renegade) police the boundaries of belonging, and reify white, Protestant and American superiority against a foil of ostensible Native American and North African backwardness. A similar process of structuring difference occurs within both Indian and Barbary captivity narratives, and involves questions of sanctioned gendered norms and the delineation of permissible and impermissible sexual relationships.
DOMESTICITY AND GENDER IN BARBARY AND INDIAN CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES

Narratives of Indian and Barbary captivity focused on difference construed along racial and religious lines. In passages that described Native American and North Africans as fundamentally demonic and monstrous, the authors of captivity tales structured difference in a way that valorized white, American, Protestantism. Any difference from this norm was fundamentally inferior. In this way the narratives policed a boundary of difference, clearly articulating and insulating a racially and religiously qualified “us” from others that differed importantly along these two axes of identity.

Even as the captivity narratives had much to say about race and religion, the tales also served to distinguish appropriate relationships and roles based on gender. Specifically, the captivity narratives promote a particular view of American yeoman domesticity in which both men and women had carefully circumscribed roles. Furthermore, the narratives police boundaries of sexual contact in a manner that secures white racial purity. In those instances where sexual transculturation is a possibility, the narratives work to eliminate any real sexual contact across racial and cultural boundaries.

Scholars have broadly addressed questions of gender and identity in the early years of the new American republic. With regard to captivity narratives specifically, the efforts of

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historians and literary scholars concentrate most on Indian captivity narratives, and within that genre most scholarly attention has focused on the earliest of narratives, with Mary Rowlandson’s work featuring prominently in the academic literature. Apart from a few works such as Linda Colley’s trans-Atlantic look at captivity within the British Empire, scholars have largely failed to explore gender and captivity across the Atlantic. By failing to look at Barbary and Indian captivities together, scholars have missed the opportunity to understand how gender was framed within both sets of narratives and how gender is used to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable social mores. Gendered roles and boundaries


constructed within the narratives can be understood through the lens of ethnogenesis where
gender, like race and religion, also structures belonging and exclusion.

Gender and Ethnogenesis

Gender roles, like race and religion, help determine the contours of belonging by
articulating appropriate in-group behavior. Scholars of ethnogenesis have studied gender as
one of the touchstones of identity. As Barbara L. Voss suggests, “gender and sexual identities
are commonly used to legitimate or discount social claims of ethnic belonging.”4 Discussing
specifically the context of Spanish California, Voss finds that gender was one element in a
manifold identity that individuals constructed to secure their place in society:

It was through subject positions such as race, gender, sexuality, generation, institutional
location, and geopolitical locale that such persons were able to forge claims to
subjectivity and survival in their new situations as colonizing agents of the Spanish
crown.5

The preservation of ethnic identity depended on clearly articulated gender roles. Furthermore,
these roles determined the rules for interaction between men and women of different racial
groups. Rules of interaction, in turn, qualified the degree to which an ethnic group assimilated
outside individuals.6

Within Barbary and Indian captivity narratives, gendered discussions help to define the
boundaries of acceptable relationships. First, between white men and white women, gendered
roles affirm patriarchy by confirming the role of husband as protector and decision-maker and

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4 Voss, 6.
5 Ibid., 13.
relegating the wife to the role of follower and patient sufferer. Furthermore, gender operates on two levels within the Indian and Barbary captivity narratives to structure belonging and exclusion. First, between characters of the normative identity – white, Protestant, American – gender structures appropriate roles of masculine protectiveness and feminine trust. Second, between characters of opposing cultural origins – white women and Native American and North African men, specifically – the narratives work to show how sexual relationships across cultural boundaries are fundamentally impermissible. While race and religion are hallmarks of identity – markers defining who does and who does not belong – gendered relations within the narratives are more accurately akin to a code which circumscribes permissible actions for a member of the normative group – in this case white, Protestant Americans.

Domesticity in Indian Captivity Tales

A careful reading of both Indian and Barbary captivity narratives illustrates the degree to which both classes of genres reify appropriate relationships between white men and women. Fundamentally, the language of gender in these specific circumstances revolve around the idea of an appropriate domestic role for both men and women. Gendered roles in early America were overarchingly patriarchal, and valorized the man as provider and protector, and emphasized the role of the wife in caring for her children. The captivity narratives do not often stray too far from this normative framework, and instead reclassify the extraordinary in terms of understandable, traditional gendered structures. During the earliest years of the American

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7 See for example Wilson.
republic, published captivity narratives maintained and perpetuated a rigid gendered hierarchy within the family. In this period there are no Hannah Dustan’s to make New England patriarchs anxious.

Within both Indian and Barbary captivity tales, the role of the husband is ultimately one of a protector. Much of the horror connected to the captivity narratives spring from the fact that the father/husband is unable to save his wife and children from captivity. The moment of captivity is in this important respect something of a subversion of the patriarchal norm. The inability of the man alone to protect his home and family argues for a broader intervention – and the subtext of much of Indian captivity tales is for an intervention that eliminates the Indian threat. Within the Barbary stories as well, when man and wife travel together, it is the husband who attempts as much as he can to protect his wife.

The husband as protector occurs in many of the stories of women taken captive by Indians. Ultimately, the husband provides the first line of defense against the Indian attack. And, although he tries valiantly to save the family, often suffering grievous injury as a result, he is ultimately unable to free his family from their fate as captives. A typical example of this occurs in Frances Scott’s narrative of captivity, published in 1786. Although the narrative blames the husband for leaving the door unlocked, thus allowing the Indians easy access to the house, his actions once the attack is underway are clearly valiant:

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8 For example, scholars have devoted much attention to the Puritan-era captivity narrative of Hannah Dustan and the manner in which she rose up against her Indian captors, killed several of them, and escaped captivity with their scalps. The contemporary rhetoric surrounding Dustan’s extraordinary exploits ultimately cast her as a mother doing what was necessary for her children, not necessarily as an independent, willful actor wreaking vengeance on her captors. See, Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, "Captivity, Liberty, and Early American Consciousness," Early American Literature 43, no. 3 (2008).
...through the Door that was left open, painted Savages with presented Arms, raising a hideous Shriek; Mr. Scott being awake, instantly jumped out of his Bed, but was immediately fired at: He forced his Way through the Middle of the Enemy and got out of the Door, but fell a few Paces from thence.9

The narrative of Eliza Swan, published in 1815, also promotes the image of husband as protector. Here, as the Indians attack, Swan describes the actions of her husband to protect his home and family:

My unfortunate husband, having chosen a favourable position, unquestionably bravely defended himself, and kept the Indians at bay until fatally wounded by a musket ball in the breast, which brought him to the ground. 10

Like Mr. Scott and Mr. Swan in the narratives above, the husband’s role is always that of protector, but many narratives do not shy away from suggesting that a husband has not properly fulfilled his role as protector of the family unit. Maria Kittle’s narrative, published in 1797, appears to question the decisions made by Kittle’s husband, although the narrative does not undermine white male patriarchy by having him give in to his wife’s demands. In this story, Mr. Kittle is on a hunting expedition with his brother – at a time when all of the surrounding settlers are aware of Indian agitation due to the French and Indian War. Maria is put at ease regarding potential Indian violence because a local Indian elder came to her and said they were not enemies. Her husband is not so sure of Native American loyalty, saying:

“My love,” said he, “be not too confident of their fidelity; you surely know what a small dependence is to be placed on their promises; however to appear suspicious might be suddenly fatal to us; we will therefore suspend our journey to Albany for a few days.” 11

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9 A True and Wonderful Narrative of the Surprising Captivity and Remarkable Deliverance of Mrs. Francess Scott, 8-9.
10 Swan, 3.
Even as Mr. Kittle and his family suspend a journey away from their home, Mr. Kittle thinks it safe to go hunting with his brother, Peter. Peter appears to be the voice of reason suggesting that: “...since hostilities have commenced so near us as the Indians inform, I think it is rather impudent to quit the family.”\(^{12}\) Mr. Kittle dismisses the danger of Indian violence, and convinces Peter to go with him. The hunting trip does not go well – and a party of Indians shoot and kill Peter. Mr. Kittle manages to kill the attacking Indians, avoiding his own capture, for the moment. Upon returning home, Mr. Kittle drops off his brother’s corpse after explaining what has happened to his distraught wife. He then tells her he will “return in an hour I hope, with a proper guard to secure our retreat from this hostile place.”\(^{13}\) Maria exhorts her husband to stay:

> “Is it not enough,” cried she, “that you have escaped one danger, but must you be so very eager to encounter others? Besides, you are spent with sorrow and fatigue – let one of your brothers perform this silent expedition.”\(^{14}\)

Mr. Kittle rhetorically pats her on the head by saying he would not put one of his brother’s into the kind of danger he would reject for himself. Ultimately, Maria gives in, saying, “I no longer oppose you; forgive my fears.”\(^{15}\) Of course, almost immediately after Mr. Kittle leaves, the house is attacked, the Indians ransack the place, and take everyone into captivity. Still, the scene is important for two reasons. First, it emphasizes the protective role of the husband. Contemporary readers of the narrative understood that Mr. Kittle was wrong to go hunting

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\(^{12}\) Ibid., 10. Obviously families that settled in westward territory faced the problem of balancing fear of danger with the need to provide for their family’s nutrition. Providing for his family may have been the motive for Mr. Kittle’s decision to hunt; however, the entire structure of the scene, and Mrs. Kittle’s heartfelt pleading suggest that Mr. Kittle did not, at that particular moment, absolutely need to go out hunting.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 15.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 16.
under such circumstances, and would have further agreed with Maria that to leave after Peter was killed was also a bad decision. Ultimately, though, the story serves to underscore the power dynamic within the patriarchal household. All Maria can do is exhort her husband in emotional tones to think about the consequences of his actions. When he makes up his mind, not only does she give up trying to convince him otherwise, she also asks forgiveness for opposing him.

Indian captivity narratives largely confirm the role of the husband as the unquestionable head of the household, even in those situations where specific characters might make bad decisions. Indian captivity narratives featuring central female captives also confirm patriarchal roles, emphasizing women as wives and mothers. Furthermore, it is the emphasis on endangered maternity that underscores the horror of captivity. The connection between maternity and the horror of captivity has its ultimate expression in those tales where mothers who recently gave birth witness the murder of their infant children by their Indian captors. The trope of infant murder traces as far back as the real-life captivity narrative of Hannah Dustan, who was taken captive in 1697. The murder of her baby by her Native American captors shocked those who heard her tale. Later narratives included very similar images of infant murder – often having the Indian captor bash the child’s brains out against a tree, or on the floor, or against a fireplace. The captivity tale of Maria Kittle includes one such scene:

“Oh God! Leave me, leave my child! He Shall not go, though a legion of devils should try to separate us!” Holding him still fast, while the Indian applied his strength to tear him away, knashing his teeth at her opposition; “Help! God of heaven! Screamed she, “help! Have pity, have mercy on this infant!...By this time the breathless babe dript its head on its bosom; the wrists were nigh pinched off, and seeing him just expiring, with a dreadful shriek she resigned him to the merciless hands of the savage, who instantly
dashed his little forehead against the stones, and casting his bleeding body at some distance from the house, left him to make his exit in feeble and unheard groans.\textsuperscript{16}

It is significant that the murder of Maria’s baby happened by the same Indian in the tale who had earlier promised her that no damage would come to her from the Indians. He continues to tell her this, even while explaining to her that the child would have to be killed because it “will much impede your progress” to the Indian village. Also important, Maria’s child is killed only a page after her sister’s unborn child was torn from its murdered mothers body by an Indian who then “dashed it to pieces against the stone wall; with many additional circumstances of infernal cruelty.”\textsuperscript{17} What matters in this passage is the sentimentality deployed to describe the bond between mother and child, and the manner in which the narrative portrays the Indian captor as unfeeling, or worse, as demonically relishing the torment he is causing.

In those captivity tales where the Indian captors did not engage in infant murder, the bond between mother and child metaphorically represents the broader theme of the dissolution of the family unit caused by captivity. Such is the case in Eliza Swan’s captivity tale, where immediately after the Indians kill her husband and capture her she:

\begin{quote}
...was stripped of my gown, shawl, stockings and shoes...not privileged to embrace or nurse my infant babe, which was but eleven months old, and which was carried in a fur sack, by one of their young squaws.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Throughout the rest of the narrative, Swan focuses on her infant, even as the Indians separate her from the rest of her family. She repeatedly refers to her separation from the child, and asks her captors to reunite her with it:

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{18} Swan, 5.
I entreated my savage masters to permit me, for a few moments to nurse my poor babe, but my intreaties were productive of nothing but abuse and sever blows.\textsuperscript{19}

Later on she speaks of her emotional pain when her Indian captors force her to give her child to Indian woman:

It is impossible for me to describe to you the manner in which it clung to its mother’s bosom, and the deep and melancholy impression which its screeches made upon my half distracted mind.\textsuperscript{20}

The narrative also speaks to the bond between mother and child through multiple references to breast-feeding. Swan asks to nurse her child, but her captors do not allow this so that later in the narrative:

One of their squaws with a young papoose perceiving me in a bad situation, in consequence of being deprived of my infant, kindly offered her’s to perform the part which nature required.\textsuperscript{21}

Interestingly, the narrative refers to the Indian child initially only as a papoose. It is only when the infant nurses the white woman’s breast that the text refers to the child as such. While it might be reading too far in this case to suggest the author of the Swan narrative is connecting Swan’s nursing of the Indian infant to a civilizing process, what is certain is that the closeness of Swan’s bond to her infant serves synecdochically for her separation from her family at large. She refers most often to the infant, even as the Indians take her other children from her. By focusing on the bond between mother and infant, the author of the Swan narrative is clearly choosing the most emotive manner to represent the broader issue of family dissolution as a result of captivity.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 18.
White Men, White Women and Barbary Captivity

Although narratives of Barbary Captivity that feature female protagonists do not at all focus on motherhood to the extent found in Indian Captivity narratives, within those tales featuring female captives, there is a relatively clear demarcation between men and women’s roles. The Barbary captivity tale of Eliza Bradley provides an excellent example of this gendered dynamic at work in the North African context. The story begins with the heroic efforts of her husband to command a ship damaged by high waves and heavy storms:

The whole crew began now to turn their eyes upon my husband, who advised the immediate lightening of the ship, as the only measure to preserve our lives – the hatches were torn up, and the ship discharged of the most weighty part of her cargo, but the storm continued to rage, and the leaks increasing, it was concluded by the officers utterly impossible to save either the ship or their effects; the preservation of even their lives becoming every moment more difficult to them.22

Like Kittle’s husband on the frontier, Bradley’s man tries his best to save not only himself and his spouse, but the entire ship’s crew as well. As in the tales of Indian captivity, Mr. Bradley is unsuccessful in this endeavor, and he, his wife, and the crew must abandon ship and alight nearby on a piece of land that they do not initially realize is on the Barbary Coast.

Soon after their landfall, while wandering in the desert in search of water, the ship’s crew and passengers fall into the hands of a party of North Africans, who take them into captivity. Once captured, Mr. Bradley continues to protect his wife, as much as he can. He cannot save her, but tries to comfort her, by letting her know what to expect. When they realize they are essentially in hostile territory:

My poor husband did everything in his power to alleviate my sufferings; he represented to me the probability of our meeting with friendly aid, by the means of which we might

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22 Bradley, 6.
be conducted to some commercial port, at which we might probably obtain a passage for Europe.  

And when the couple fears their captors might separate the couple:

No, my dear wife (said he) I will never consent to abandon you while life remains – with the Almighty nothing is impossible – if we put our trust in Him, he may prove compassionate towards us and give us strength to pursue our journey, and support us in our trials...  

Still later in the tale, Mr Bradley tells his wife he may be able to secure for her a bible which one of the Arab captors had taken from another member of the ship’s crew. This bible would prove to be her saving grace throughout the tale, allowing her to quote pertinent passages to counteract whatever evil the Arabs were presenting her with at that moment:

My husband now told me that he had been informed by one of the sailors that his master had taken a bible from him which he found in his knapsack, and which the Arab still had in his possession; which being of no use to him, as he could not read it, he thought he might be persuaded by my master to part with it if reasonable application was made – this was indeed pleasing news to me, as in case of a separation from my poor husband I could find in this sacred volume that consolation which no human power on earth could afford me.  

Throughout the story then, as far as he is able to, Eliza Bradley’s husband plays the role of protector. Eliza Bradley, narrative voice of the tale, continually emphasizes the bond between husband and wife, by referring to his kindnesses, and calling him, in more than one instance “my poor husband.” It is also significant that the role of the husband in this last passage is in some ways replaceable by the ultimate voice of patriarchal authority – God in the Bible. It is the Bible that comforts Eliza Bradley when her husband cannot and it is her best source of succor in her captivity. And, as she is a woman without a child, the narrative structures her femininity not

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23 Ibid., 12-13.  
24 Ibid., 17.  
25 Ibid., 32.
on her attention to her offspring, but on her steadfast faith in her religious convictions and the patience with which she suffers through her captivity.

Eliza Bradley, as the voice of this captivity narrative, suffuses her re-telling of the events with constant reference both to God, His Grace, and direct quotations from the Bible. Her devotion to the Bible and to God contrasts throughout the work against what she terms the idolatry of the Arabs and their general irreligion. For example, she speaks to the importance of the Bible to her in the following statement:

As I had always been under serious apprehension of being deprived of my bible...or that I should be compelled to engage with them in their idolatrous worship of the Supreme Being, I hinted to my interpreter that although we believed in one and the same Grand Spirit, yet there was a difference in our mode of worshipping Him: and that while they peaceably pursued their’s, I hoped that I should not be disturbed while engaged in mine; and what was a still greater consideration with me, I hoped that none might be permitted to take from me my bible...26

Her devotion to the Bible and to God as the ultimate patriarch reveals itself even in those instances where an Arab has shown her kindness or tried to help her, she denies agency to that particular individual and instead suggests that her good fortune has come only from the hand of God. For example, when she is given the Bible by her Arab captor she expresses her gratitude in the following terms:

My feelings on receiving so rich a present from the hands of one, whose very nature was at enmity with our Christian religion, may perhaps be conceived but I cannot attempt to describe them – to form a correct idea of my emotions at that time, let him, and him alone, who has full faith in Christ, and at whose hands he has found mercy, and is not ashamed to confess him before the world, transport himself in imagination to the country where I was then; a distant heathen clime, a land of darkness, where the enemy of souls reigns triumphant, and where by an idolatrous race the doctrines of a blessed Redeemer are treated with derision and contempt...27

26 Ibid., 52.
27 Ibid., 42.
Here too her religiosity and patience stands in contrast to the darkness, ignorance, and idolatry of the Arab other. Bradley’s God-talk simultaneously structures her as a good Christian woman, and works to deny the humanity and agency of her captors. Gendered divisions within the narrative – between the brave husband and forbearing wife – do not preclude an intertwining thread that classifies the Arab other as fundamentally irredeemable and ultimately lacking any agency that is not granted through God’s mercy alone.

Torture, Bondage, and the Vulnerable Female Body

Beyond the articulation of appropriate gender roles for white captives, both Indian and Barbary captivity narratives feature prominent instances of white women held captive and tortured by their captors. Scenes of white female bondage and torture imply the threat of rape and the corollary loss of white racial purity that attended transcultural sexual contact. Significantly, within each narrative featuring the bound or tortured female captive, none of the works ever describe an actual rape. To acknowledge rape as a real possibility would have suggested that white racial purity was simply an illusion, and more importantly, would compromise the integrity – sexual and otherwise – of every white woman who was ever taken captive. Any real sexual encounter across cultural lines was a bridge too far for writers and readers of captivity narratives. Still, the instances of bondage and torture deserve study, as they demonstrate how captivity narratives handled the sexual threat of the other.

The Manheim narrative and Mary Smith’s narrative, both tales of Indian captivity, feature an almost identical torture scene in which two adolescent girls are stripped, tied to saplings, pierced with needles and then burned to death. The language within each narrative is
almost identical, and what stands out to the modern reader is the degree to which the language is fundamentally erotic and sexually suggestive. The scene, as described in the Manheim narrative, deserves a full quotation:

These furies assisted by their comrades, stripped the forlorn girls, already convulsed with apprehensions, and tied each to a sapling, with their hands as high extended above their heads as possible; and then pitched them from their knees to their shoulders, with the upwards of six hundred of the sharpened splinters above described, which, at every puncture, were attended with screams of distress, that echoed and re-echoed through the wilderness...the splinters, all standing erect on the bleeding victims were every one set on fire, and exhibited a scene of monstrous misery, beyond the power of speech to describe, or even the imagination to conceive...It was not until near three hours had elapsed...and that they had almost lost every resemblance of the human form, that these helpless virgins sunk down in the arms of their deliverer, Death.28

The narrative depicts the torture of the Manheim girls in terminology that is almost overtly sexual. First, the Indians tie the girls and strip them naked. The rest of the torture sequence emphasizes the erotic aspects of the girls’ death: the Indians pierce the girls bodies with erect needles, the associated bleeding suggesting the kind of bleeding associated with loss of virginity, and finally their sinking into the arms of death suggests le petit mort. After such a suggestive passage, it is no wonder that the author had to reiterate the girls’ virginity.

Within the Barbary captivity narratives, it is Maria Martin’s tale of captivity that most prominently features female bondage. Martin’s narrative published in numerous editions from 1806 onward, underwent a slight change around 1811, where the text promoted as an authentic narrative differed from the earlier editions.29 Even still, each edition of Martin’s

28 Manheim, 6.
29 For the publication history of the Martin narrative and its connection to the earlier Velnet narrative see Baepler. Essentially two sets of the Martin narrative exist, with other slight variations between each edition. Some of the texts essentially repeat the text of the captivity narrative of Maria Velnet, described within the text as “An Italian Lady.”
narrative included an in-depth description of her bondage, a fact that suggests this part of the story was of particular interest to the readership. The Martin narrative is particularly provocative because her bondage occurs immediately after she is given an offer of freedom by the Bashaw (through an intermediary) if she converts to Islam from Christianity. Martin refuses and, as the narrative voice of her captivity tale, describes her dungeon and state of captivity in the following terms:

It was built of rough stone, and the walls were about 8 feet in breadth, it contained but one small window, with large iron gratings, and which afforded so little light that I could hardly discern an object four feet from me...I observed, on the 11th day of my confinement in this dismal cell, two smiths enter with their hammers, bringing along with them chains in abundance. They no sooner entered than they began the barbarous work of chaining me; an enormous collar was fixed round my neck, and another still larger round my waste, to both of these was attached a large iron chain, the end of which was fixed to a ring in the wall. This ring was five feet from the ground, and only allowed me to sit down on the stool above mentioned. They next riveted two iron rings around each of my wrists, to each of which a chain was fixed.  

Martin’s bondage places her in a severely compromised position. Undoubtedly more than a few readers felt this description of bondage titillating, a fact the publishers played on by featuring in the works’ frontispiece a woodcut of the bound Martin in her stone prison. The idea of a prone woman would also suggest sexual compromise. However, it is important to note that while Martin’s narrative focuses on her bondage, the narrative focuses almost exclusively on how alone she was in her cell. Apart from the initial moment where the blacksmiths come in to bind her, Martin’s narrative never describes her as bound in the presence of any other non-white male. She therefore spends two years in bondage in which she spends here most difficult moments all alone, wondering when freedom will come, and trying

30 Maria Martin, History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin Who Was Six Years a Slave in Algiers, Two of Which She Was Confined in a Dark and Dismal Dungeon, Loaded with Irons Written by Herself to Which Is Annexed, a History of Algiers (Boston: W. Crary, 1806), 37.
to find a comfortable position in which to rest with all the chains around her. The silences in the narrative are telling, for example, once bound Martin must have had contact with her jailers, but the narrative avoids mentioning anyone in the cell with Martin during her captivity. The narrative essentially uses Martin’s isolation to argue for her sanctity, protecting Martin’s sexual purity and deflecting any suggestion of sexual compromise through rape. Again, as in the Manheim narrative, the writer worked diligently to assure the reader that sexual transculturation did not occur. Both the Barbary and Indian captivity narratives foreclose transculturation as an option for women, assuaging the fear of rape, and denying any willful boundary-crossing.

Sexual Compromise, and the impermissibility of Transculturation

Works within both the Indian and the Barbary captivity genres contain episodes where the circumstances of captivity provide the female captive the option of crossing cultural boundaries – often with the understanding that by doing so she could improve her physical comfort and perhaps end her status as a captive. Additionally, within both sets of works narratives include individuals who have willfully crossed cultural boundaries. In cases of possible transculturation, the narratives never fail to have the main protagonist avoid the curse of transculturation – by escape or some other plot line, or simply through the character’s own strength of will. The narratives treat characters in the latter case – where an individual who is racially white and religiously Christian (at least before transculturation) chooses to cross cultural boundaries – as cultural traitors. The most conspicuous moments of possible transculturation involve female characters. In each case the female protagonist confirms her
cultural allegiance, often choosing the threat of death before giving in to transculturation – particularly in those cases where true transculturation required consummation.

Potential transculturation occurs in those moments where the captive is presented an alternative to captivity, with the added element of religious conversion in the Barbary narratives. This narratives couch the alternative in terms of marriage across cultures. In the Indian captivity narrative, the best example of this (for the time period under study) occurs in the captivity of Mrs. Mary Smith, published in 1815. In this narrative, told largely in the third person, Smith faces the possibility of execution by her Native captors. Indeed, she is placed on the gallows over the fire where “a ring was first formed by the children, a second by the women, and a third by the men round the wretched victim” to watch her demise. Smith prepares herself mentally for her almost certain death, when at the last moment, an old Indian chief gives her the choice “whether she would accede to the proposals of the old chief [of marriage] or would rather resign herself up a victim to savage barbarity.” Before the reader hears of Smith’s ultimate choice, the narrator of the tale switches from a third person narration of fact to what is ostensibly Smith’s own account of her emotions at this moment. As the narrator explains, “here I cannot better describe the feelings of Mrs. Smith...than to make use

31 Smith, An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith, (Now a Citizen of Bourbon County, Kentucky) During His Captivity with the Indians, in the Years 1755, ’56, ’57, ’58, & ’59 in Which the Customs, Manners, Traditions, Theological Sentiments, Mode of Warfare, Military Tactics, Discipline and Encampments, Treatment of Prisoners, &C. Are Better Explained, and More Minutely Related, Than Has Been Heretofore Done, by Any Author on That Subject. Together with a Description of the Soil, Timber and Waters, Where He Travelled with the Indians, During His Captivity.: To Which Is Added, a Brief Account of Some Very Uncommon Occurrences, Which Transpired after His Return from Captivity; as Well as of the Different Campaigns Carried on against the Indians to the Westward of Fort Pitt, since the Year 1755, to the Present Date, 16.

32 Smith, An Affecting Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mary Smith Who, with Her Husband and Three Daughters, Were Taken Prisoners by the Indians, in August Last (1814) and after Enduring the Most Cruel Hardships and Torture of Mind for Sixty Days ... Was Fortunately Rescued from the Merciless Hands of the Savages by a Detached Party from the Army of the Brave General Jackson.
of her own words.”

The shift in narrative voice heightens the sentimental nature of the passage, and makes Smith’s quandary that much more vivid for the reader.

Smith’s words, transcribed by the narrator of the narrative, serves as a long justification for Smith ultimately accepting the old Indian’s offer, at least conditionally, even while she emphasizes how distasteful she finds the idea of marriage:

I know I prayed for death – I heartily wished to be delivered from such merciless cannibals; - but just escaped from torture, I was reduced to the necessity of becoming a prostitute in order to prevent the most cruel death, but I had little time to reflect, and that must be employed faithfully – to resign myself as a victim to the barbarity of the Savages, was a dreadful thought, and to gratify the wishes of one of those vile monsters, was I conceived, although shocking in the extreme, not quite so bad as to endure their savage torture – of those two impending evils, I was therefore induced to choose the least – I gave the old sachem to understand that I would cheerfully comply, and was conducted immediately to his wigwam – here I affected great regard for his person, but as I feigned great indisposition, begged him to suffer me to remain in the situation I then was in, until I should in some measure recover my health and spirits, to which, contrary to my expectations, he acceded.

Smith, in this passage, is essentially explaining and qualifying her transcultural transgression. She wants the reader to know that she really had no other choice than to agree with the old sachem and become his wife/concubine. Also, by her cleverness Smith essentially prevents what, to the reader, would have been the most consequence of her marriage to the old sachem – having to engage in a sexual relationship across cultural boundaries.

Smith goes even farther in explaining her decision to placate the sachem, stating that she had even contemplated suicide to prevent a sexual union between herself and the old Indian. The narrative here suggests a fundamental opposition to transcultural sexual

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33 Ibid.

34 Smith, An Affecting Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mary Smith Who, with Her Husband and Three Daughters, Were Taken Prisoners by the Indians, in August Last (1814) and after Enduring the Most Cruel Hardships and Torture of Mind for Sixty Days... Was Fortunately Rescued from the Merciless Hands of the Savages by a Detached Party from the Army of the Brave General Jackson, 16-17.
relationships that would dilute the purity of White Americanness. Smith is so driven not to compromise herself through a relationship with an Indian that she leaves the settlement, essentially hazarding death, “tending easterly, in hopes of reaching some Christian settlement.” The sentence in which she articulates her plan to escape is telling. She ties, implicitly, her rejection of transcultural sexual union with her wish to return to a Christian settlement – here too we see an interconnection of the racial and the religious. The Smith narrative demonstrates one way the narratives handle the danger transculturation: the captive chooses the only course available, seeks forgiveness for that transgression, and an accommodating plot forecloses the possibility of any real transcultural relationship. Smith’s decision to risk her life and escape is the right one. By leaving the camp she encounters a party of troops commanded by one of Andrew Jackson’s subordinates who rescue her.

The Hobson’s choice of cultural and sexual compromise in exchange for freedom was a trope that also appeared in Barbary captivity narratives. In the 1811 edition of Maria Martin’s tale, the protagonist is presented with a very similar offer to that faced by Mary Smith. In this case, Martin tells of hearing the true nature of her master’s character from one of her co-captives:

His master pretended to harbor an unusual love for me, and through fear of being betrayed and punished agreeable to the laws of the country, should he attempt forcible means to gratify a lustful passion, he has commanded him [her co-captive] to solicit my compliance, and inform me, that if I would willingly consent to indulge him in what he should request, he would extend to me the same liberty which his wives (or concubines) enjoyed: but, continued Malcolme, fear not, do not be terrified at his threats: he will no

36 As she states in the final pages of the narrative she was, “rescued from their merciless hands by Lieut. Brown and his brave little company of soldiers.” Ibid., 24.
doubt do every thing in his power to compel you to comply with his request, but should he attempt such a thing against you, he will lose his head. 37

This information troubles Martin greatly, and tells her co-captor, called Malcome, to give the vizier the following message:

That I would never consent to gratify him in his unlawful request, as it would be in direct violation of the laws of my God and my country...I resolved sooner to die, than to submit to his brutal proposals.38

Martin’s tale of coercion is similar to Smith’s in that the protagonist here also prefers death to submitting to a relationship that she sees as fundamentally against her beliefs. Again, in this case, plot devices intervene to foreclose any real possibility that the vizier will get his way. She refuses his advances again and again, and as a result he locks her in a dungeon after telling the Bey – the ruler of the Barbary state – that she is a foreign agent. Her solitary confinement essentially protects her cultural and sexual sanctity, and although she suffers a great deal of pain and suffering while in her dank dungeon cell she is finally liberated through the efforts of Malcolme, her co-captive, who escaped and told the English consul of her plight.

In each of these cases, where a captor offers a female captive her freedom – albeit a qualified freedom – by giving in to both a sexual and cultural transculturation, the individual protagonist essentially chooses the possibility of death instead of compromising her sanctity. Furthermore, the structure of the narrative essentially rewards each woman, by characterizing their choices as the correct ones, and resolving the conflict of transculturation with an appropriately happy ending. Both of these episodes suggest that both writers and readers of

37 Martin, History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin Who Was Six Years a Slave in Algiers, Two of Which She Was Confined in a Dismal Dungeon, Loaded with Irons, by the Command of an Inhuman Turkish Officer Written by Herself to Which Is Added, a History of Algiers, with the Manners and Customs of the People, 40-41.
38 Ibid.
captivity narratives in America maintained the sense of racial and cultural purity by denying the possibility of sexual contact across boundaries of race and religion.

Within the captivity narratives, concepts of gender do important work in building structures of belonging and difference. Just as religion and race structure difference through demonic, monstrous, and animal language, so too does gender police the boundaries of culture. Importantly, it is through a gendered understanding of captivity, using the figure of the female captive, that the authors of captivity tales foreclosed transculturation as an option, and thereby buttressed female sanctity and diffused the threat to white racial purity represented by transcultural sexual relationships. Essentially, within the world of the captivity tale, the fate of the race depended on the female captive who, with the help of an accommodating plot and her strength of will, prevented compromising her own cultural identity.
STAGING BARBARY CAPTIVITY: AMERICAN IMPERIAL DESIRE AND TRANSCULTURAL FEARS
IN THREE EARLY AMERICAN PLAYS

The crisis sparked by Americans taken captive on the Barbary coast resonated across the Atlantic, resulting in a response within American cultural artifacts that reflected concern for American captives and unease about the place of the new nation among its global peers. The plays in this study are simply part of that broader cultural moment – representing attempts to classify and categorize the Barbary threat. Constructions of difference were never complimentary to North Africans, and instead served to valorize American ideals against a foil of Barbary backwardness. Furthermore, in the context of the Barbary crisis, articulations of North African difference betrayed implicit and even explicit desires to control the North African Middle East militarily – a prospect that the new nation was simply unable to realize given its weak military capability.¹ This essay takes a closer look at three theatrical works that understand difference across the axes discussed earlier – appreciating both race and religion as

1 See especially Robert J. Allison, The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815 (University of Chicago Press, 2000). The American desire to control the Middle East – at least rhetorically – is akin to the process of the more overtly controlling colonial discourses discussed by Edward Said in his work Orientalism. I would argue; however, that for the purposes of this study Said's Orientalist rubric is not entirely adequate. Although Said's work informs my contentions, his thesis presupposes the power of the West to enforce its will on powerless Muslim subjects. In point of fact, America at this time had only just come out of its own colonial subjection, and was not yet in a position to enforce its will on other powers. It was only toward the end of the period under study that the United States had something approaching a functional navy, and even then the ability to bombard port towns from the sea is not similar to the kind of pressure a colonial power could bring to bear on the Barbary States. Still, the American response to the Barbary crisis did reflect a certain Western cultural chauvinism that Said so forcefully captured in his work. Said defines Orientalism as a “style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident. (2). This distinction is made by Western scholars and thinkers who “have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, “mind”, destiny, and so on” (2-3). The Orientalist program depends on the overarching power of the West to colonize the East both literally through military power, and figuratively through the production of a colonial body of thought that essentially placed the East (meaning, Middle Eastern, Islamic cultures) in an innately inferior position relative to the ostensibly more rational and progressive West. Essentially, the Orient served as a representation of everything the West thought it was not – irrational, erotic, difficult to understand, mysterious. See Edward W. Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). For a discussion of the United States Navy and the Barbary Crisis see Gardner Weld Allen, Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1905).
structuring difference, while also revealing profoundly gendered understandings of both otherness and the place of the new nation within the world at large. The plays are, in order of their date of publication: Susannah Rowson’s *Slaves in Algiers*, Sarah Pogson’s *The Young Carolinians*, and Jonathan Smith’s *The Siege of Algiers*.2

In many ways the early American view of Muslim North Africa in these plays resonates to this day. Specifically, the plays reveal three distinct, but interrelated concerns regarding the Barbary crisis. First, the plays – particularly Rowson’s *Slaves in Algiers*, and Smith’s *Siege of Algiers* – betray a deep-seated fear of both religious and racial transculturation, especially in romantic and sexual relationships. The playwrights diffuse the threat of transculturation through unaccommodating plot lines, minimizing the threat to American racial and religious supremacy posed by the renegade – the willful, Western convert to Islam. The plays also diminish the challenge inherent in the renegade by transforming him from an inherently challenging figure to one of simple, comic derision. Second, the female-authored plays – Rowson’s *Slaves in Algiers*, and Pogson’s *The Young Carolinians* – construct a compelling parallel whereby the circumscribed agency of the prominent female protagonists mirrors the limited ability of the new American nation to project its power internationally. Finally, all three plays include an element of didactic democratization, wherein the culturally inferior North African characters are improved morally either through mere contact with their American

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2Sarah Pogson, "The Young Carolinians," in Essays, Religious, Moral, Dramatic and Poetical (Charleston: Archibald E. Miller, 1818); Susannah Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers, or, a Struggle for Freedom a Play, Interspersed with Songs, in Three Acts* (Philadelphia: Wrigley and Berriman, 1794); Jonathan S. Smith, *The Siege of Algiers, or, the Downfall of Hadgi-Ali-Bashaw a Political, Historical, and Sentimental Tragi-Comedy in Five Acts* (Philadelphia: J. Maxwell, 1823). The Young Carolinians was attributed to the author and playwright Maria Pinckney. However, Sarah Ford demonstrates, convincingly, that the work was actually written by Sarah Pogson. Ford presents as evidence copyright ledgers from South Carolina that show Pogson as the play's creator. See Sarah Ford, "Liberty Contained: Sarah Pogson’s 'the Young Carolinians; or, Americans in Algiers'" in *Early American Literature* 41, no. 1 (2006).
betrers, or through the missionary-like proselytizing of republican virtue by American characters.

Early American plays are particularly useful historical artifacts for understanding American imperial desire and fears of transculturation during the earliest years of the new republic. As genuinely created artifacts these works more accurately portray American constructions of the Orient using a gendered lens. Additionally, from a practical standpoint a play – with its varied cast of characters, scenes, and focuses – gives the author greater subjects for dissecting underlying epistemological processes. Furthermore, plays have only recently received the scholarly attention they deserve, and instead scholars have devoted more energy to other intellectual products such as broadsides, editorials, or eyewitness accounts of Barbary captivity. Moreover, recent scholarship, such as the work by Heather Nathans, Jason Shaffer and Jeffrey Richards, among others, illustrates the importance of theatre in articulations of early Americanness. Nathans is careful in her assessment of the role of the theatre during the Revolution, finding that it was admittedly “tangential to the process of nation-building.” However, Nathans finds that after the Revolution, theatre served as an important laboratory allowing audiences, authors, and actors to join in a shared space to safely explore the implications of American republicanism. Shaffer goes further, drawing a parallel between

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contemporary filmic representations of the Revolutionary period and the colonial theatre – explaining that both juxtaposed American figures characterized by self-sacrifice and virtue with appropriately tyrannical British villains. Shaffer also extends Nathans idea of a theatrical laboratory by suggesting that the Early American theatre fulfilled an important didactic function for its audience by circumscribing – in a manner that was far more vivid than any political tract – what were and were not appropriately American ways of thinking and behaving. Richards appreciates theatre and dramatic texts as mechanisms for the creation of an American identity while conceding that certain tropes evolved from trans-Atlantic precursors.

All three plays in this study have been the subject of some, albeit limited academic scrutiny. Historians differ mostly in their understanding of how the works structure cultural difference, particularly whether the works generally privilege racial difference over religious difference or vice versa. Scholars, who understand the works as not-so-subtle critiques of American slavery, overlook the religious content in these works. By emphasizing religion over race, scholars risk overlooking the fact that fear of intercultural relationships across racial lines was a distinct element in the works. Scholars have so far paid minimal attention both to the


7 Elizabeth Dillon sees race as the most prevalent theme in Rowson’s Slaves in Algiers, and largely excludes any understanding of religion in this work. See Dillon. Dillon point of view differs from Linda Colley, who in Dillon’s estimation finds that religion was the primary signifier of difference in North African captivity. Dillon and Colley are essentially talking past one another, as Dillon’s work concerns a specific, fictional, and American work dealing with captivity, while Colley’s essay addresses broader appreciations of Islam and North Africa in British thought informed by actual situations of physical captivity. See Colley, "Britain and Islam, 1600-1800: Different Perspectives on Difference."

figure of the renegade and fears of transculturation within the works, and the particular manner in which female protagonists are used within the narratives to represent the limited ambit of American power over the Barbary States of North Africa.⁹

As in the more traditional tales of captivity, these plays draw conspicuous racial and religious boundaries that police and prevent transcultural romantic and sexual relationships. In Rowson’s work, *Slaves in Algiers*, a prominent sub-plot concerns the American captive Frederic and his romantic infatuation with Fetnah, a woman described in the Dramatis Personae as a “Moriscan Woman,” but whose ethnic background is just a little more complicated. Her father is Ben Hassan – the play’s Jewish renegade (whose own story we will consider shortly) – and she admits to another female slave in the seraglio that:

> I was not born in Algiers, I drew my first breath in England; my father Ben Hassan, as he is now called, was a Jew. I can scarcely remember our arrival here, and have been educated in the Moorish religion, tho' I have always had a natural antipathy to their manners.¹⁰

Even with Fetnah’s ethnic heritage clarified for the audience, it is the vision of her as a Moorish, Muslim woman that causes Frederic’s infatuation. He steals into the garden of the Dey – the ruler of the Algerian regency – hoping to “find some distressed damsel, who wanted a knight-errant, to deliver her from captivity.”¹¹ He hides when he notices Fetnah entering his corner of the garden and only reveals himself after she exclaims to the winds, “I do wish, some dear, sweet, Christian man, would fall in love with me, break open the garden gates, and carry me

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⁹ Additional works have used Barbary Captivity literature to explore other areas of early American culture, particularly the relationship between these stories and the creation of an American public sphere. See M.A. Bouâñani, “Propaganda for Empire: Barbary Captivity Literature in the Us,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 7, no. 4 (2009); Dzurec.

¹⁰ Rowson, 8.

¹¹ Ibid., 30.
off.” As he reveals himself to her, Frederic understands Fetnah in both religious and racial terms, referring to her as, “my sweet little infidel” and as a “lovely moor.” Fetnah quickly disabuses him of his misconceptions, stating again that she is, in fact, not a Moor, yet the circumstances of the play conspire to keep the potential lovers apart. By the end of the play Fetnah decides not to leave with Frederic to the land of liberty, but instead to stay in Algiers to care for her father, Ben Hassan.

In addition to the storyline of Fetnah and Frederic, Rowson’s Slaves in Algiers is suffused with similar situations where potentially transcultural relationships, defined on both racial and religious terms, are ultimately thwarted by an unaccommodating plot. Examples include the romantic attachment the Dey’s daughter, Zoriana, feels for Henry, an American captive. Zoriana is unequivocally, ethnically North African, yet throughout the play she expresses a yearning for the American captive Henry, describing him repeatedly in religious terms. Zoriana’s connects her desire for Henry to her often-stated desire to become a Christian and leave Algiers. She explains her love to one of her father’s servants, saying: “I am a Christian in my heart, and I love a Christian slave, to whom I have conveyed money and jewels sufficient to ransom himself and several others.” When Zoriana secures Henry’s freedom she expresses her affection for him with the following words:

Gentle Christian, perhaps I have over-stepped the bounds prescribed my sex. I was early taught a love of Christianity, but I must now confess, my actions are impelled by tenderer passions.

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., 32.
14 Ibid., 20.
15 Ibid., 26.
Significantly, the plot prevents the possibility of a transcultural relationship between Henry and Zoriana due to the fact that Henry is engaged to another American captive called Olivia. Through this plot device, Rowson again solidifies racial and religious boundaries and denies the possibility of viable, transcultural relationships.

In James Smith’s *The Siege of Algiers*, racial and religious signifiers also build a coherent structure of cultural difference. Smith’s work is largely a critique of Western submission to the Barbary tributary system. Curiously, Smith uses a number of pseudonyms to refer to the United States and other Western powers within the narrative. The contemporary audience would have readily understood the significance of the pseudonyms and their actual counterparts. Smith articulates his understanding of the United States in religious terms referring to the nation in his work as the United Christian Brotherhood of the West. Significantly, none of the European powers, in contrast, has a name laden with such religious significance.

Apart from the religiously emotive pseudonym Smith gives the United States, the work operates, quite literally, under a specter of religious difference: One of the plays most conspicuous characters is “Christian Monitor” a ghostly presence that appears occasionally during and at the end of scenes, to make moral pronouncements about the action on stage. Christian Monitor’s first appearance occurs as the American representative, Consul Tribute, meets with the Dey’s advisors. Tribute bows and kisses the hand of the Dey’s representative and takes the seat offered him with the following aside to the audience: “In truth no man of Christian conscience can sit easy in this chair of iniquity!”16 Christian Monitor skulks onto the scene, making the following observation: “I am not an accredited agent here, by the rule of

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Barbarian policy, yet am I an invisible monitor to...let reason whisper in the Christian ear what conscience should dictate”.17 This scene encapsulates the threat to religious integrity that a true, Christian American faces by their mere presence in Algiers. Consul Tribute articulates that threat, and the ethereal Christian Monitor hammers the point home.

As in Rowson’s Slaves in Algiers, Smith’s Siege of Algiers expresses fears of transculturation most strongly in those moments when the plot of the play suggests possible sexual contact across racial lines. In the play’s most sexually fraught scene, two virgin slaves – one Georgian and one Circassian – await their seemingly inevitable deflowering by the Dey. The virgins’ geographical origin is significant as the Caucuses supplied most of the Ottoman Empire’s white slaves.18 If the racial significance of this geographical fact were lost on the audience, the Dey underscores the point when he signals which woman he wants first by dropping a white handkerchief at her feet and saying, “this for you, fairest of the fair!”19 The dropped, and therefore soiled, handkerchief is a powerful metaphor for the two slave women’s racial identity, as well as their almost-certain fate.

After the Dey drops the handkerchief the scene continues to underscore the racial incompatibility between the Dey and his slaves. Each slave bemoans her captivity and talks of happier times. Importantly in each short tale shared by the captive women they mention being in love with a youth from their own land. As the slave Georgina relates:

17 Ibid.

18 For more on Ottoman slavery see: Géza Fodor Pál Dávid, Ransom Slavery Along the Ottoman Borders Early Fifteenth-Early Eighteenth Centuries (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Albert Howe Lyber, The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913); Ehud R. Toledano, Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1997).

19 Smith, The Siege of Algiers, or, the Downfall of Hadgi-Ali-Bashaw a Political, Historical, and Sentimental Tragi-Comedy in Five Acts, 63.
I was most faithfully pledged to a noble and generous hearted youth from my native land! But cruel fate would now force me into the arms of him, whose first sight is an antidote to anything like love. Would to heaven that day had been my last, when I was treacherously stolen away from my native land...  

By describing youthful love between racially and ethnically similar youth, the play juxtaposes the women’s past with their current situation where they face losing their virginity to a old man who is the distinct opposite of a young, noble, racially-similar youth.

Like Rowson, Smith avoids scandalizing his audience by allowing the Dey to fulfill his lusts with the young, white virgins. Instead, the two slaves save themselves from their fate by drinking a very strong poison. Christian Monitor, the voice of conscience throughout the play, asks them to reconsider, yet in the end he refuses to judge them too harshly, saying:

The final judgment on those two unfortunate mortals who have thus offered themselves up as earthly victims, to preserve their female purity, the great book of fate can only determine. May they be received as fair and spotless virgins, entitled to that divine grace which the Supreme Ruler of all things can give, and through his great mercies, may they rest in eternal peace.

Christian Monitor’s presence and words are significant, providing something of a religious sanction to the women’s decision to kill themselves instead of compromising their virginity and whiteness by serving the Dey. Notwithstanding his earlier admonitions to the women against suicide, once the deed is done, Christian Monitor does not speak of the women as having committed an unforgivable sin. Instead, his words after witnessing their demise construct the women as “spotless” martyrs to racial purity.

In addition to using both race and religion as important signifiers of cultural difference, Smith and Rowson’s plays both feature a conspicuous renegade character – an individual who is

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20 Ibid., 64.
21 Ibid., 67.
a willful convert to Islam. The renegade is a particularly important figure within American captivity stories because he or she challenges the immutability of racial and religious identity. The renegade speaks directly to early American fears of cultural dilution and the threat of assimilation.²²

Like the treatment given to transcultural relationships in Smith’s Siege of Algiers and Rowson’s Slaves in Algiers, the renegades’ stories also control the threat of transculturation by constructing the renegade as a figure of comic condescension instead of a threat to ideas of Christian religious superiority and white racial hegemony. Within each author’s work both Westerners and Muslim, North Africans treat the the renegade as an opportunistic scoundrel. By structuring the renegade in this manner, both authors deny the renegade any credibility and by extension negate the legitimacy of cultural and religious conversion.

In Rowson’s Slaves in Algiers, Ben Hassan is a former Jew who moved with his daughter from Great Britain to Algiers and converted to Islam to escape criminal prosecution.²³ The play depicts his conversion and loyalty to Islam as tenuous at best. He admits to one of the American captives early in the play that he escaped to Algiers after “having cheated the Gentiles, as Moses commanded,” and turned “Mahometan,” to avoid further legal entanglements.²⁴ The American characters in the play articulate their distaste for Ben Hassan, even as they rely on him for help to secure their escape. In this case, as in Smith’s The Siege of Algiers, the renegade easily crosses cultural boundaries foreclosed to fully Christian or fully

²³ Rowson, 8.
²⁴ Ibid., 17-18.
Muslim characters. Yet, even though Hassan is able to operate both among Westerners and Muslims, neither side ever truly trusts him. When the American captive Frederic seeks Hassan’s help to secure a ship, he expresses his concern about Hassan in an aside to the audience that is appropriately bombastic: “I will trust this fellow no farther, I am afraid he will play us false – but should he, we have yet one resource, we can but die; and to die in a struggle for freedom, is better than to live in ignominious bondage.”  

25 Fundamentally, it is the very boundary-crossing of the renegade that makes him a figure of questionable loyalty and distrust.

Ben Hassan’s story delegitimizes the idea of genuine conversion to Islam, and Hassan’s faith operates as a kind of religious drag – a superficial identity that put on or taken off as required. Rowson reifies the connection between Hassan and this idea of a cultural drag performance in a scene where Hassan – frightened by a crowd of armed slaves surrounding his house – attempts to obscure his identity by dressing as a woman.  

26 Rowson constructs Hassan as a character that the audience simply cannot take seriously, thereby bypasses the challenging, existential problems implicated by the renegade.

In The Siege of Algiers, Smith also includes a murky, untrustworthy renegade as a central character. The character Factotum is described in the Dramatis Personae as “A Christian renegade interpreter, and broker to Consul Tribute,” the American agent in Algiers. Smith does not smoke screen Factotum’s identity in the same way that Rowson does, yet Factotum is still marginal and mistrusted by both the American and European characters in the play, and the Algerians. Like Ben Hassan in Rowson’s play, Factotum’s status allows him to operate across

\[\text{25} \text{Ibid., 18.}\]

\[\text{26 Ibid., 53.}\]
cultural boundaries. However, in Smith’s play, such transgression is fundamentally distasteful and polluting. For example, Consul Tribute, seeking to work out a corrupt trade deal in coffee with the Algerians declares, “I dare not come in contact with these Musselmen – my Factotum is the man for such business.” Tribute even recommends that the Algerians turn to Factotum to help them secure purchase of the coffee, but in a whispered aside admits, “Factotum has covered many iniquitous schemes here for your benefit – it is true that he contrives to get his own share in some way.”

The Algerians, like the American and Europeans within the play, also treat Factotum as a devious individual. At the beginning of the play, when the Algerians realize that Factotum will be Consul Tribute’s agent in the coffee scheme, one of the Dey’s advisors, Muley Mahomet, says to another Algerian, “I perceive that Tribute...places this business in the hands of his Factotum – some artifice must be at the bottom! We must probe him further!” Toward the end of the play, when it becomes clear that Factotum is playing both sides of the American-Algerian divide, Muley Mahomet exclaims, “The renegado apostate Factotum, has turned out a double-faced villain towards us, and deserted Algiers for fear of punishment.”

Throughout the play Factotum proves to be an opportunistic rogue. While acting as an agent for Tribute and the American merchant who actually owns the shipment of coffee the Algerians are attempting to buy in a corrupt deal, Factotum gives his game away in an aside to the audience, admitting: “I will have my own pickings out of this concern, as we contrive to

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28 Ibid., 16.
29 Ibid., 17.
30 Ibid., 110.
secure to ourselves all the profits.” 31 Factotum again attempts to line his own pockets as he is helping the Americans secure a loan to settle their debts in order to leave Algiers quickly, after the Dey ordered their immediate expulsion. Factotum explains his motives in an aside to the audience: “It is true I am to receive a handsome douceur when the bills are paid, but I need not tell you this part of my negotiation.” 32 Like Hassan, Factotum is also ultimately a figure of questionable loyalty, characterized by no moral compass, and an abiding interest in providing for himself alone.

At the end of the *Siege of Algiers*, Factotum must flee Algiers on his own, finding no safety with the Europeans or with the Algerians. The play ties Factotum’s ambivalent loyalty and readiness to cheat anyone to his status as a renegade. And as with Rowson’s Hassan, the play denies the legitimacy of Factotum’s conversion to Islam. Instead, both Ben Hassan and Factotum are figures of scorn and derision, made safe for an American audience. In order to sustain the superiority of America’s cause and American culture, Rowson and Smith had no other choice but to structure Hassan and Factotum as clear villains. Their plays offer no room for ambiguity regarding whose culture was truly superior.

In addition to creating a discourse of difference based on both race and religion, and foreclosing the possibility of real, transcultural relationships, Barbary captivity plays also betrayed American concerns about the place of the nation in the world and its ability to exercise its will globally. Susannah Rowson’s *Slaves in Algiers* and Sarah Pogson’s *The Young Carolinians* both use conspicuous female protagonists who are limited in their ability to escape

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31 Ibid., 56.
32 Ibid., 99.
their situation to mirror the circumscribed power of the new American republic in the world and in relation to the Barbary powers. For example, in the second scene of the first act of Slaves in Algiers, Rebecca, the play's main female protagonist, soliloquizes on the capture of her young son and asks: “Must a boy born in Columbia, claiming liberty as his birth-right, pass all his days in slavery.”  

She goes on in lugubrious fashion, “how his brave countrymen purchased their freedom with their blood...to think that we are slaves each serving different masters, my eyes o'erflow with tears.”

Rebecca, understands the irony of her enslavement, yet is powerless to affect a change. Here Rebecca's situation is an almost perfect proxy for the place of America in the international arena during the early years of the Barbary crisis. The American government at this time could largely only lament the captivity of its citizens as it had no navy to affect a military solution and minimal financial means to pay tribute and release its citizens.

In a scene later in the same play, Rebecca reunites with her son at Ben Hassan's house. This entire scene is an overwrought ode to republican virtue. Rebecca voices her sadness at her son's captivity while her son bemoans the fact that he is but a child, unable to rightfully defend himself and his mother. Rebecca speaks, “Alas! My dear Augustus, can I be happy while you are a slave? My own bondage is nothing – but you, my child.” To this, Augustus replies, “Nay, mother, don't mind it, I am but a boy you know. If I was a man...I'd stamp beneath my feet, the wretch that would enslave my mother.”

Rowson constructs a subtle parallel tying the weakness of mother and son to the weakness of the American republic. Even still Rowson tempers apparent American weakness with plenty of optimistic bravado when Augustus says,

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33Rowson, Slaves in Algiers, 10.
34Ibid.
“Fear, Mother, what should I be afraid of? Ain't I an American, and I am sure you have often
told me, in a right cause, the Americans did not fear a thing.”36 In this statement we see a
conflation of two early American tropes – the articulation of a robust American identity
 premised on an exceptionalism of personal virtue, and the figure of the republican mother who
instills in her children a love of freedom and liberty.

Sarah Pogson's play, *The Young Carolinians*, similarly structures American imperial
ambition and its real-world limitations around conspicuous female characters. As in Rowson’s
work, the women in Pogson’s play also have limited resources and essentially no ability to
improve their situation on their own. Furthermore, it is through the associated male figures’
 attempts to rescue their women out of captivity that articulations of American imperial
ambition abut the limited scope of American power. For example, James, a character stuck in
 America laments his inability to rescue the lovely Ellinor by saying:

O, that I had but the command of some gallant vessels, when our brave tars should
force these plunderers to release my friends, and all our captive countrymen. Treaties
with pirates are as pearls cast to swine. No, the day must come, when our sailors shall
make the crescent bend to our fixed stars; till then, Algerines, Tripolitans, and all the
hord of barbarians, will insult, plunder and enslave us.37

Fundamentally, James’ statement is one of frustration at America’s inability to make its will felt
in the world. Here Pogson even includes a policy critique, suggesting that making treaties to
appease the Barbary powers was ineffectual. Instead, Pogson suggests direct military action –
to “make the crescent bend” – to American will. At the same time that James’ statement
bemoans American inability to defeat the Barbary powers militarily, he attenuates this

36Ibid, 49.
37 Pogson, 100.
weakness by contrasting the “brave tars” of America to the “hord of barbarians” that are the North African privateers.

In a similar situation in the same play, Zekiel, one of a pair of humble lovers, plans to rescue the object of his affection, Margaret. When planning his rescue of Margaret, Zekiel makes the comments that, “like any stout lad that loves a lass and liberty, I’ll clear her out and myself too, some way or another, so to work.”

Zekiel’s statement boisterously connects the rescue of Margaret to American ideals of individualism and freedom. Furthermore, Zekiel’s ingenuity and success in rescuing Margaret strikes a note of optimism and implicates American imperial desire as it assumes the ability of the United States and its citizens ultimately to exercise authority over the Barbary States. Still, Pogson’s main purpose is to illustrate the limits of American power.

In addition to fears of transculturation and the gendered construction of America’s limited power in the world, the plays also all have one other element in common - the explicit understanding that the Muslim North Africans are intrinsically incapable of realizing the benefits of democracy on their own and must be taught these values by Americans. All three plays demonstrate this quasi-missionary need to didactically democratize North Africa, but the trope presents itself most forcefully in Rowson's Slaves in Algiers and Smith's Siege of Algiers. In Rowson’s work, Fetnah – the half-Jewish Moorish woman of English extraction – expresses admiration for American values. Responding to the surprised interrogations of Selima, her companion in the seraglio who wonders at her love of American freedom, Fetnah explains that she was taught the love of freedom and liberty from an American: “a female captive, to whom I

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38 Ibid., 64.
became greatly attached; it was she, who nourished my mind the love of liberty, and taught me, woman was never formed to be the abject slave of man."  

Fetnah does not express an intrinsic love of liberty – even though she is not ethnically Moorish. Rather she is able to respect freedom, autonomy, and a qualified equality for women only after learning these values from an American woman.

Rowson’s *Slaves in Algiers* includes another scene emphasizing the ability of Americans to teach their North African counterparts the love of liberty. Toward the end of *Slaves in Algiers* the Algerian ruler Muley Moloc agrees to embrace the will of his people and to stop being so persistently dictatorial. Moloc is shown the error of his ways after a palace coup in which the American slaves instigate a revolt, capture him, yet refuse to execute him. Rebecca, the same slave who taught Fetnah to love American values, reprises her role as the didactic voice of democracy when she tells Muloc:

> By the Christian law, no man should be a slave; it is a word so abject, that, but to speak it dyes the cheek with crimson. Let us assort our own prerogative, be free ourselves, but let us not throw on another’s neck the chains we scorn to wear.  

Rebecca’s words deeply move The Algerine ruler, so much so that, in a paroxysm of democratization he replies:

> I fear from following the steps of my ancestors I have greatly erred: teach me then, you who so well practice what is right, how to amend my faults...henceforward, then, I will reject all power but such as my united friends shall think me incapable of abusing.

Again we see the themes of the inherent incompatibility of Islamic, North African culture – here coded as “tradition” – with Western democratic republicanism. Also, Muloc explicitly asks the

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40Ibid., 70.
41Ibid., 71.
Americans to teach him American-style democracy, and in the end the play presents the happiest of endings - freedom is won, and the curtain falls. Muley's democratic turn, and the statements of Fetnah clearly fall in line with the idea of didactic democratization – that individuals from the Muslim world cannot embrace democracy unless taught to do so by their American betters.

The conclusion of Smith’s play features a similar palace coup. However, in this instance, the new leader of the regency, called Omai, does not so readily accept republicanism. Still, when an American representative suggests that Omai should surrender or face military action from the Americans, his people cry out to him: “Enough, Omai the brave! Enough; let us have peace, and save our women and children, if you have no regard for our city?”42 Like Muley Moloc, Omai ultimately listens to the voice of his people. Through a decidedly different educational process the United States essentially spurs Omai toward the correct course of action through a threat of military action. The U.S. representative, who initially asked Omai if he would fight on, says:

I come once more from my commander, Admiral Thunder, who does not dispute your personal bravery, but willing to save the effusion of blood on both sides, he commands me to tender you the conditions of peace, on the terms already offered. If you refuse this overture it will be the last---hostilities must then be renewed, and continued until you cry enough, or your city is laid in ruins.43

Hearing the cries of his people, and recognizing the possibility of American corrective action against him, Omai agrees to peace terms. However, it is not a happy ending, because even though he submits to the will of the people, his honor is so damaged that he exclaims, “I cannot
consent to make apology according to the terms prescribed, and thus become the scoff of the Christian world—no, rather would I die,"\textsuperscript{44} and then kills himself. In the end, even though the ruler loses, Republicanism wins, as the play’s action removes the tyrant Omai and essentially supports the will of the Algerian people. \textit{Siege of Algiers} presents the didactic element more subtly than Rowson’s \textit{Slaves in Algiers}, yet in Smith’s work Omai’s obedience to the will of his people happens only under the watchful eye, and persuasive power of Admiral Thunder’s fighting force. In both cases, Americans –through the didactic persuasion of soft or hard power – are able to educate North Africans, and bring change toward American-style republicanism.

Together, the works of Pinckney, Rowson, and Smith implicate various facets of the American intellectual responses to the Barbary captivity crisis. Rowson’s \textit{Slaves in Algiers} and Smith’s \textit{Siege of Algiers} highlight American discomfort with transculturation in the North African context. In their exposition of North African difference Rowson and Smith use both racial and religious signifiers in an effort to classify and then ultimately denigrate Muslim North African culture. In Rowson’s \textit{Slaves in Algiers} and in Pogson’s \textit{The Young Carolinians}, prominent female characters who ultimately lack the agency necessary to secure their own release mirror the incapacity of the new United States to affect change internationally during the earliest years of the republic. These works showcase some of the earliest examples of enduring American ways of understanding Muslim North Africa, and the wider Muslim world. The plays emphasize the cultural weakness of the North African Muslims while expressing the frustration of American inability to exercise its desired dominance over such a culture. Additionally the works betray an

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 140.
understanding that the North Africans would be so much happier if only they absorbed the example of their American superiors and supplanted tyranny with republican virtue.
CONCLUSION

In The White Album, a collection of short stories written by Joan Didion and originally published in 1979, the author discusses the importance of narration to the human experience. “We tell ourselves stories in order to live,” she explains, concluding that our drive to impose a narrative on our lived experience is essentially a process of coping with, and creating meaning out of chaos:

We look for the sermon in the suicide, for the social or moral lesson in the murder of five. We interpret what we see, select the most workable of multiple choices. We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the “ideas” with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience.¹

The process of sifting through information, of categorizing, or even of making up meaning out of whole cloth is not a practice new to our own time. Just as Didion sought order out of chaos in 1970s America, so too did the authors of the early American captivity narrative try to make sense of the changes in their own time. A shifting frontier inhabited by inscrutable indigenes, a changing geopolitical climate, an ongoing rebellion, and ultimately a lust for land so great that it demanded the removal of entire peoples, were all processes informed and influenced by the captivity narrative. The captive proved the perfect hero for readers in early America. This figure, whether male or female, was always an innocent victim of processes that he or she never quite fully realized. The texts confirm the righteousness of the captive against the savagery of the Indian or Arab other. These works lack the kind of postmodern questioning of the American project that might besmirch the reputation of the captive – and by extension impugn the innocence of the nation at large.

Furthermore, the metaphor of captivity reflected the place of the new nation in the world. No longer a colony, yet hardly a world power in its own right, the nascent American republic had a distinct imperial ambition that did not match its capabilities—military or otherwise. For the first few decades of its existence, the new American republic was essentially captive to the more powerful nation-states of Europe—chiefly Great Britain and to a lesser extent France. In these narratives of captivity, the individual captive operated as a proxy for the nation as a whole. The captive’s escape from bondage—whether in the North American wilderness, or from the dank prisons of Algiers—presupposed the victory of the entire nation against its foes, wherever in the world they may be.

The fate of the captive was the fate of the nation. Even more importantly, the voice of the captive served as the voice of the nation, particularly as the captive through his or her narrative was able to articulate who did and who did not belong. Just as any individual is not defined through one characteristic alone, the captivity tales did not use one rubric of analysis to police belonging. Instead, the ethnogenesis of belonging in the Early American context occurred across three main axes—religion, race, and gender. The narratives above intertwine articulations of difference along both racial and religious lines. Physical difference—what we can call a racial understanding of the other (even as our own view on race has evolved to understand it only as a social construct)—implicated as well religious understandings of the other as fundamentally demonic and monstrous. Additionally, through the lens of gender, the captivity narratives kept a close guard against the specter of transculturation, allowing the sacrifice of virgins to prevent the stain of actual interracial sexual contact that would have called into question the racial purity of whiteness in the early Republic, and thus undercut all
claims to a superior ethnic status. Finally, transculturation was further qualified as an aberration in those cases where individuals indeed crossed boundaries and became the other. The narratives concede the possibility of such a transformation, but question the sincerity of cultural converts, constructing them as tainted by their decision and, in many ways, as greater figures of scorn than the savages with whom they have chosen to live.

By tracing these themes across both North American and North African captivity narratives, this work has attempted to show how the multifarious gossamer strands that construct difference within the narratives coalesce to form a more coherent web of exclusion. The demonic other existed not only in the wilds of North America, but also in the forbidding deserts of the Barbary Coast. Furthermore, both Arabs and Indians were equivalently monstrous and savage. Indeed, the use of Indian and Islamic imagery interchangeably shows the extent to which strands of otherness crossed paths and entered the everyday patois of racial and religious boundary-building. Finally, by addressing North African and North American otherness together, one gains an appreciation of the precariousness of the American nation in its earliest years. The victory against Barbary privateers or Native American raiders was not a foregone conclusion in this era. Certainly, by the end of the war of 1812, the political threat of the Indian tribes had diminished significantly, but this was little comfort to frontier settlers who still had to face the possibility of capture. Furthermore, even Monroe’s boisterous words in his Seventh Address to Congress were more ambition than reality. The nation had managed to cow the Barbary Coast with the exploits of Stephen Decatur and its new Navy, but it was still unable to stand up to the larger armadas of Europe.
Part of understanding the structures of difference built by early Americans includes an appreciation that these people were trying to understand a very frightening world. It is easy, in the comfort of modernity, to say that North American ways of looking at the other were simply racist or chauvinist. While this might be true at the most fundamental level, it is also true that the structures of othering within the captivity narratives provided comfort to a nation that perhaps understood its own tenuous place in the world, replaced fear with bombast, and sought through denigrating the other to prop up an indomitable sense of self that provided some relief sense of mission in a world that was arbitrarily cruel.

The metaphor of captivity is an enduring one. I had the privilege of attending a conference in 2012 hosted by the University of South Alabama where scholars presented myriad papers around the ideas of captivity and confinement.\(^2\) I was amazed at the variety of works presented. Chronologically the works ranged from Ancient History to contemporary popular romance novels. The thematic range of scholarship was perhaps even greater, with works considering captivity within the carceral state, captivity and the events of 9/11 and even works that considered texts themselves as captive – either within their disciplines or within the limited interpretive frameworks scholars use to understand them.

The conference presented the great breadth and depth of captivity as an interpretive category. I imagined the as yet unconsidered applications of captivity as a metaphor which scholars could easily deploy to great effect. Scholars have yet to use, to an adequate degree, captivity as a metaphor for homosexuality or operating within an heteronormative world

\(^2\) “Captivity Writing Unbound,” University of South Alabama, Moble, Al, October 11-13, 2011
http://www.southalabama.edu/english/captivity/index.html
characterized by a bipolar gendered norm. Scholars may also choose to deploy the captivity metaphor to understand other situations where individuals are essentially captive to a world that is not made to accommodate them – mental illness and physical handicap come to mind. Indeed, at a more basic level much work remains to be done with more traditional narratives of captivity, for example, by placing contemporary works of wartime captivity – such as Jessica Lynch’s Iraq war memoirs – alongside earlier works to understand commonalities and differences.

With such scholarly ground untouched the future for captivity studies remains bright. The only downside to such a broad application of the captivity metaphor is that scholars will inevitably see every circumstance as one of captivity. What may prevent this kind of scholarly morass is the development of a scholarly consensus on the contours of captivity – although this too sounds something like a narrative of exclusion. In any case, scholars will inevitably draw their own conclusions about captivity as a theoretical construct, limiting and refining the appropriateness of captivity to particular areas of study.

Joan Didion herself spoke to the continued appeal of captivity as a narrative image. The first half of the quotation displayed above includes the following words:

We tell ourselves stories in order to live. The princess is caged in the consulate. The man with the candy will lead the children into the sea. The naked woman on the ledge outside the window on the sixteenth floor is a victim of accidie, or the naked woman is an exhibitionist, and it would be 'interesting' to know which. 3

It is no accident that the princess held captive in the consulate ranks first among Didion’s triptych of contemporary images that both frighten and titillate. Captivity even now holds a powerful grip on the American imagination, and will undoubtedly continue to be a

3 Didion, 11.
powerful lens through which Americans come to understand and qualify their place in the world.


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