

## AMERICAN INDIAN CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES

“According to Kathryn Derounian-Stodola’s Introduction to *Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives* (New York: Penguin, 1998): ‘Statistics on the number of captives taken from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries are imprecise and unreliable since record-keeping was not consistent and the fate of hostages who disappeared or died was often not known. Yet conservative estimates run into the tens of thousands, and a more realistic figure may well be higher. For some statistical perspective, however incomplete, consider these figures: between 1675 and 1763, approximately 1,641 New Englanders were taken hostage (Vaughan and Richter, p.53); and during the decades-long struggle between whites and Plains Indians in the mid-nineteenth century, hundreds of women and children were captured (White, p.327).’ Alden T. Vaughan & Daniel K. Richter, ‘Crossing the Cultural Divide: Indians and New Englanders, 1605-1763,’ *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 90 (1980), 23-99; Lonnie J. White, ‘White Woman Captives of Southern Plains Indians, 1866-1875,’ *Journal of the West* 8 (1969) 327-54.

Donna M. Campbell  
“Early American Captivity Narratives”  
*Literary Movements* (2009)

“Stories, supposedly factual, of white people abducted by Indians. These narratives constituted a definite early American literary genre, and continued to appear from the colonial period to the last quarter of the 19th century. The subject matter was monotonously similar--sudden attacks on cabins and the burning of settlements, the scalping of men and women and the killing of children, horrible tortures of the captives carried away alive and frightful sufferings as they went with the red men from one camp to another, sometimes starving, often beaten, occasionally (it was alleged) even eaten....

The earliest narratives [are] simple, direct, and religious.... The narratives became more ‘literary’... Then hacks began to provide these narratives, supplanting pious individuals who were thankful to God for their rescue. Hatred is expressed for white men (especially Frenchmen and priests) as much as for Indians... Even more popular was the gory and sensational... The material becomes a melange of fact and fiction with salability rather than truth the main object. Charles Brockden Brown legitimized the captivity narrative in *Edgar Huntley* (1799) by transferring it into the realm of avowed fiction.

In the 19th century the problem of authenticity became a genuine, often insoluble one, especially as historians began to turn to these narratives as a basis for their chronicles. More objective were the editions prepared by Samuel Gardner Drake (1832 and 1839), J. Pritts (1839), Henry R. Schoolcraft (1844). Collections of narratives of captivity are to be found at the Newberry Library, the Huntington Library, and the Library of Congress.”

Max J. Herzberg & staff  
*The Reader’s Encyclopedia of American Literature*  
(Crowell 1962)

“A single individual, usually a woman, stands passively under the strokes of evil, awaiting rescue by the grace of God. The sufferer represents the whole, chastened body of Puritan society; and the temporary bondage of the captive to the Indian is a dual paradigm--of the bondage of the soul to the flesh and the temptations arising from original sin, and of the self-exile of the English Israel from England. In the Indian’s devilish clutches, the captive had to meet and reject the temptation of Indian marriage and/or the Indian’s ‘cannibal’ Eucharist. To partake of the Indian’s love or of the equivalent of bread and wine was to debase, to un-English the very soul. The captive’s ultimate redemption by the grace of Christ and the efforts of the Puritan magistrates is likened to the regeneration of the soul in conversion. The ordeal is at once threatful of pain and evil and promising of ultimate salvation. Through the captive’s proxy, the promise of a similar salvation could be offered to the faithful among the reading public, while the captive’s torments remained to harrow the hearts of those not yet awakened to their fallen nature.”

Richard Slotkin  
*Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*  
(Wesleyan U 1973)

See *Fanny Kelly* (illustrated)

#### NARRATIVES

- 1682 Mary Rowlandson, *Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*
- 1684 Increase Mather, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*
- 1696 Cotton Mather, *Humiliations Follow'd with Deliverances: The Captivity of Hannah Swarton and Hannah Dustan*
- 1697 Jonathan Dickinson, *God's Protecting Providence Man's Surest Help*
- 1706 Cotton Mather, *Good Fetch'd out of Evil: The Captivity of John Williams & Mary French*
- 1707 John Williams, *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*
- 1707 Cotton Mather, *A Memorial of the Present Deplorable State of New England: Captivity of Hannah Bradley* (in 1697 & 1703)
- 1728 Elizabeth Hanson, *God's Mercy Surmounting Man's Cruelty*
- 1750 William Fleming, *Narrative of the Sufferings and Surprising Deliverances of William and Elizabeth Fleming*
- 1757 Peter Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty Exemplified in the Life and Various Vicissitudes of Peter Williamson*
- 1758 Robert Eastburn, *The Dangers and Sufferings of Robert Eastburn*
- 1760 Elizabeth Hanson, *Narrative of the Captivity of Elizabeth Hanson*
- 1796 Susannah Willard Johnson, *Narrative of Captivity of Mrs. Johnson*
- 1815 Mary Smith, *An Affecting Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mary Smith*
- 1823 James E. Seaver, *The Life of Mary Jemison* (willing captive)
- 1824 John Ingles, *The Story of Mary Draper Ingles and Son Thomas Ingles*
- 1832 William P. Edwards, *Narrative of Captivity of Frances & Almira Hall*
- 1839 Rachel Plummer, *Narrative of Captivity of Rachel Plummer*
- 1862 Minnie Buce Carrigan, *Captured by the Indians: Reminiscences of Pioneer Life in Minnesota*
- 1870 Sarah L. Larimer, *The Capture and the Escape or Life among the Sioux*
- 1872 Fanny Kelly, *My Captivity among the Sioux Indians* (illustrated): commentary
- 1896 John Rodgers Jewitt, *The Adventures of John Jewitt*
- 1897 Charlotte Alice Baker, *True Stories of New England Captives*
- 1954 H. H. Peckham, *Captured by Indians* (14 true accounts of survival)

- 1985 Frederick Drimmer, ed., *Captured by Indians: 15 Firsthand Accounts, 1750-1870*
- 1992 Carolyn Meyer, *Where the Broken Heart Still Beats: The Story of Cynthia Ann Parker* (willing captive)
- 1994 Lorenzo D. Oatman, Olivia A. Oatman, Royal B. Stratton, *The Captivity of the Oatman Girls among the Apache and Mohave Indians*
- 1995 Gary L. Ebersole, *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Postmodern Images of Indian Captivity*
- 1998 Kathryn Derounian-Stodola, ed., *Women's Captivity Narratives*
- 2000 Gordon M. Sayre, Olaudah Equiano and Paul Lauter, eds., *American Captivity Narratives*
- 2004 Grace E. Meredith, *Girl Captives of the Cheyennes: A True Story of the Capture and Rescue of Four pioneer Girls, 1874*
- 2005 Scott Zesch, *The Captured: A True Story of Abduction by Indians on the Texas Frontier*

Michael Hollister (2015)