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The adaptability of women's captivity narratives in American literature

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English (Literature)

Program of Study Committee:
Matthew Wynn Sivils, Major Professor
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Julie Courtwright

The student author and the program of study committee are solely responsible for the content of this thesis. The Graduate College will ensure this thesis is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

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ABSTRACT

In this analysis, I explore several women's captivity texts to show how the captivity narrative genre has adapted to the cultural needs of its readers and authors as well as what the creation of a captivity narrative means to those involved. To examine the scope of the captivity narrative throughout time and across genres in American literature, I focus my analysis on a variety of captivity texts, written by both men and women, comprising of both fictional and true accounts of captivity: James E. Seaver's 1824 *Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison*, Sarah F. Wakefield's 1864 *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees*, Harriet Prescott Spofford's 1860 "Circumstance," and Jaycee Dugard's 2011 *A Stolen Life*. Early women captives, like Jemison and Wakefield, were able to use the captivity narrative to share their experiences among the Indian people. The captivity narrative provided them with a space to have a voice in literature, and therefore in history. As the captivity narrative was appropriated into fictional stories, authors like Spofford could use the genre to create a sense of familiarity for their readers and deliver layered, cultural messages. The captivity narrative form is still prominent in contemporary literature and media. For captives like Dugard, the captivity narrative provides a space for reconstruction after captivity, in both memory and identity. Therefore, the genre is a vehicle for women's self-expression, regardless of when it occurs, who else is involved in the creation of the text, and what the captive's intent and purpose is in writing a captivity narrative.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The captivity narrative genre marks a tradition fundamental to historical literature. Defined by Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, the captivity narrative “encompasses any story with a captor (usually from a minority group) and a captive (usually from a majority group)” (xi), with many of the most well-known occurrences consisting of Native American captors and white female captives in early American literature. Following an archetypally prescribed formula, captives typically endure three phases of captivity in a narrative, defined by Richard Vanderbeets as, “Separation (abduction), Transformation (ordeal, accommodation, and adoption), and Return (escape, release, or redemption)” (562). While spared from death in the initial capture, each phase finds the captive confronting unfamiliar experiences and emotions as they attempt to make sense of a captive life.

Shedding light on the unknown, the American frontier and its inhabitants, the captivity narratives that make up American literature are useful in both their historical and cultural context. It is the human interest in the unknown, the dangerous, the “value of tempering their joys with a play or story chronicling the misfortunes and tragedies of others” (Vanderbeets 548) that creates a continual interest in the stories of those held captive. This makes the captivity narrative always relevant and ever-engaging. Ranging from the “religious confessional” to the “noisomely visceral thriller,” Roy Harvey Pearce explains that the captivity narrative has always been one of “several genres, for several significances” (1). The presence of the captivity narrative story throughout American literature marks it a tradition worth exploring.

The traditional captivity narrative gave women a place and voice in American literature. Derounian-Stodola claims that the genre is “arguably the first American literary form dominated by women’s experiences as captives, storytellers, writers, and readers” (xi). A genre catering to women, captivity texts were often best-sellers, able to connect with readers across the growing country. Christopher Castiglia explains that part of the appeal of the genre was the connections women could find “between the plight of the literal captive and less tangible forms of victimization and restriction experienced by their white, female readers” (4). Captivity narratives put words to women’s experiences, which readers could translate to their everyday lives, making the texts uniquely adaptable to each female reader. Derounian-Stodola also claims that the genre critically assesses “gender and cultural archetypes concerning identity,” giving women a more faceted depiction in literature (xxi). Texts focusing on the experiences of women in Indian captivity allow for women’s storytelling at a time when this opportunity was often otherwise unavailable.

The captivity narrative gives a voice to the voiceless, both in the events and people that it explores. The genre has and will continue to allow women to tell the story they want to share in writing. Even when men removed them from the writing and publishing of their stories, women could still rely on the genre to give them a voice, a place in literature. Women captives have consistently shown their ability to “transgress and transform the boundaries of the genre in order to accomplish their own ends” (Castiglia 4). The captivity narrative sets a story of transformation in writing, and therefore in history. Captive women often experience a life and culture foreign to their own, an experience filled with “generic and cultural changes, divisions, and differences occasioned by the captives’ cultural crossings” (Castiglia 4) that they can share in their texts. The narratives allow for discussion of experiences

important to the analysis of American culture – fear, control, power, discrimination, doubt, cross-cultural relationships – that women cannot always fully share in other mediums. As the genre has remained a staple of American literature for hundreds of years, it has evolved to meet the needs of its writers, captives, and readers. I explore several women’s captivity texts to show how the narrative has progressed and what its creation means to those involved. Covering both true and fictional captivity texts, written by both men and women, I analyze a scope of narratives about women who at times defy cultural expectations to fulfill their need to share their experience in writing.

My analysis will focus specifically on the captivity experiences of women in American literature in the seventeenth through twenty-first centuries. As such, my claims do not necessarily apply to the many other types of captivity narratives: men’s captivity narratives, Barbary captivity narratives, narratives with Indians as captives, slave narratives, etc. Throughout my analysis, I use the original spelling, punctuation, and typography of the narratives, as found in the versions provided by Derounian-Stodola’s *Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives*.

In Chapter Two, “Transformative Power in the Captivities of Jemison and Wakefield,” I focus on two nineteenth century true accounts of captivity, James E. Seaver’s 1824 *Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* and Sarah F. Wakefield’s 1864 *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees*, to examine how relationships with Indians create transformation in captive women. Mary Jemison was adopted into a Seneca tribe in her captivity and ultimately chose to stay with the Indians instead of returning home, fully assimilating into their culture. While her narrative is transcribed and undoubtedly heavily edited by Seaver, Jemison’s voice still shines through in her narrative, an account not merely of captivity, but of her over sixty years

in life among the Indians. Sarah Wakefield developed a close relationship with Chaska, the Dakota man she called her “protector” while in captivity, and fought to clear his name after her release. Wakefield writes her narrative with hopes to stifle the salacious rumors that she was an “Indian lover,” which made her a distrusted outcast upon her return to white society. Both women use their narrative space to establish themselves as strong-willed women instead of the victims of Indian aggression. Jemison and Wakefield push back against the assumptions made about their captivity experiences by the dominant culture and even speak against white culture, recognizing its flaws once they are distanced from it. These narratives show how women could break from the traditional, Indian-shaming rhetoric of early captivity narratives to provide a message of unification and acceptance.

Chapter Three, “American Gothic Captivity and the Civil War: Harriet Prescott Spofford’s ‘Circumstance,’” examines Spofford’s fictional short story written in 1860 that combines elements of the Gothic and captivity narrative genres. Following the typical captivity narrative formula, Spofford’s heroine is captured by a “Indian Devil” on her way home and is physically confined to the wilderness all night as she awaits her husband’s rescue. She must appease her captor or risk losing her life as she held completely at its will. I use examples from several traditional women’s captivity narratives (Mary Rowlandson, Hannah Dustan, the Panther Captivity Narrative, Mary Jemison, and Sarah Wakefield) to further illustrate the presence of the captivity narrative in the experiences of Spofford’s heroine. Spofford’s language and descriptions connect this story to the image of the American people held captive by the tensions of the country’s division in 1860. In my analysis, I explore how the two genres overlap in Spofford’s story to allow her to comment on the rising tensions in America before the outbreak of the Civil War. This comparison

highlights Spofford's purpose in writing "Circumstance" as she did – to evoke commonalities and establish connections between the rhetorical situation of both captivity narratives and her original readers in both the tensions and fears they faced. Her story demonstrates how the fictional captivity narrative provides opportunities for women's expression similar to true accounts of captivity.

In Chapter Four, "Constructing the Contemporary Captivity Experience," I focus my analysis on Jaycee Dugard's 2011 memoir of captivity, *A Stolen Life*. Captured in 1991 at just eleven years old, Dugard spends eighteen years in captivity, primarily isolated to the backyard of her captors, Phillip and Nancy Garrido. Her captors exert complete control over her, physically, sexually, and mentally, demonstrating the illusion of complete power that motivates many contemporary captivities. Dugard's text shows that the contemporary captive has a similar experience, both in and following captivity, to the women of Indian captivities. Her narrative functions to help her reconstruct her captivity experience as well as her identity as a free woman. In her transparent writing style, Dugard also shows how and why a captive constructs a narrative and its effects on her life after captivity. I compare her text with elements and examples from traditional captivity narratives to show the comparison between the old and new versions of the genre in the role of the captor, use of power and control, and the idea of redemption and freedom. Dugard's text proves a useful example for how the captivity narrative has evolved to meet the needs of the captive and maintain a place in literature today.

An examination of the women's captivity narrative genre in American literature proves that women have always found the genre useful in constructing a text that aptly fits their needs. The ability of the captivity narrative to adapt to the cultural expectations and

needs of its readers makes the genre distinct in its ability to remain timeless while also familiar, something I argue allows the genre to transcend others in its ability to provide for the needs of its women captives. Exploring the particular narratives that demonstrate a change from the prescribed format, a challenge to the authorities of white men, is crucial to understanding the power of the captivity narrative in both the past and future of American literature.

CHAPTER II
TRANSFORMATIVE POWER IN THE CAPTIVITIES OF JEMISON AND
WAKEFIELD

Early women captives, such as the famed Mary Rowlandson writing in 1682, established the captivity narrative genre in American literature as they narrated their own experiences in Indian captivity, giving eager readers a glimpse into the frontier lands inhabited by Native Americans. Captives saw and participated in a world so close to home yet so radically different from their own culture. Despite the varying lengths of time spent in confinement, it is clear that captivity produced a change in all who survived it. Women captives often were able to use the captivity narrative genre to share their personal transformations in captivity. Many early narratives attribute these transformations to religious experience. Viewing their captivity as a trial from God, captives often reported experiencing renewed faith and restored trust both during and after their captivity.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries pushed the captivity narrative into a new direction as the political climate in the country encroached on the experiences of captives. Hilary E. Wyss explains this shift as “more politically motivated dramatic renderings of the violent confrontation between frontier settlers and the Native Americans they were displacing” (66). True narratives showed the clashes of civilizations in the experiences witnessed by captives. Inspired by these real-world experiences, authors increasingly created fictional narratives to explore facets of captivity untold or muted in the true stories. Adapting to a changing world allowed the genre to remain relevant as authors “mirrored the aspirations and anxieties of successive generations” (Kolodny 187). With this ever-changing variety in

narrative elements, shifts also occurred in the transformations experienced by women captives and told in their narratives. More often, women used the genre to comment on the issues they saw in their own culture, made clearer to them during the events of their captivity. Christopher Castiglia claims that this transition promotes a more feminist reading of women captives in the eighteenth through twentieth centuries since “the captivity narrative allowed women authors to create a symbolic economy through which to express dissatisfaction with the roles traditionally offered white women in America” (4). James E. Seaver’s 1824 *Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* and Sarah F. Wakefield’s 1864 *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees* demonstrate the evolution of the captivity narrative genre as both Jemison and Wakefield use their narratives to express how relationships with the Indians transformed them in captivity, allowing them to criticize aspects of white culture while speaking in defense of the Indians.

Mary Jemison and Sarah Wakefield, although captured over 100 years apart and whose lives were quite different after captivity, show similarities in their break from many of the traditional aspects of the genre in their narratives. Both women offer a critique of the dominant, white male culture while casting Native Americans in a more humanistic than demonic light. What is most remarkable about Jemison and Wakefield’s stories is their development of relationships with their captors and other Native people. Mary Jemison, captured as a teenager in 1758, began to identify as a Seneca woman after her adoption into the tribe, marriage to a Seneca man, and motherhood. Her acculturation led her to choose to stay rather than return to the life of her childhood. Sarah Wakefield’s husband was appointed as a physician at Yellow Medicine, Minnesota a year before her capture in 1862. Wakefield was living among the Dakota people with her family and had opportunities to interact with

them and their culture, claiming, “I found them very kind, good people” (247). Unlike the teenaged Jemison, Wakefield was a wife and mother in her early thirties at the time of her capture. Her relationship with Chaska, the Dakota Indian who protected her during captivity, plays a central role in her narrative and in her life after captivity. While a focus of early captive women was resisting acculturation or identification with their Native captors, Jemison and Wakefield appear to welcome it while in captivity. They allowed their experiences in captivity and with the Native Americans to change them in both their view of the Native American culture and people as well as their view of their own Euro-American culture and people. Whether they did this to have a better chance of survival or because they were open-minded individuals when entering their captivity, the relationships Jemison and Wakefield made during their time in captivity would change and define the remainder of their lives.

As a best-selling narrative, Seaver’s *Narrative* has received much more critical attention than Wakefield’s *Six Weeks*. Much of the academic discussion surrounding Jemison’s narrative centers on the competing voices of Seaver and Jemison in the text and her portrayal as both a white and Seneca woman. Critics often discuss Wakefield’s narrative in relation to her firsthand experience of the Dakota Conflict. Janet Dean explores the ways in which Wakefield refuses to follow other captive women in their shaming of the Native Americans and comments on the narrative’s lack of critical representation due to its dismissal as a historical document. A few critics have matched the two women in their similar approach to defining their experience among the Indians. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola singles these two narratives out in their ability to show Native Americans in a positive light. June Namias, who edited and wrote introductions for editions of both narratives, comments,

“Wakefield’s narrative, like Mary Jemison’s, offers an alternative vision of Indian-white relations on the frontier” (258). In this chapter, I will examine the transformations occurring in the captivities of Jemison and Wakefield that allow them to use the captivity narrative genre to promote their own telling of their experiences and relationships among the Indians.

Breaking from Tradition: Narrative Writing and Structure

Although their initial captivities were a century apart, Jemison’s narrative was published only forty years before Wakefield’s, meaning that they likely had some of the same original readers. Jemison and Wakefield both break from the traditional captivity narrative in the way they tell their stories. While they follow many of the traditional aspects of the genre, which their readers were likely to anticipate, they do not allow their narrative to function merely as a story of captivity but as a vehicle for their message and a greater picture of their life surrounding their captivity. Their narratives, then, portray them first as women, not captives.

As with many captivity narratives, it is difficult to determine how much control and influence these women had over their stories. Jemison, unable to read or write, was of course unable to author her own narrative. She therefore chose to tell her story to James Seaver, a local doctor, who wrote and published her narrative. Seaver made a deliberate choice to tell Jemison’s story in first-person. Elena Ortells Montón points out that, in doing this, “Seaver constructs a woman’s first person voice that authenticates the experience narrated” (77), which brings credibility to the events, people, and culture she witnessed and gives her vocal authority in the text. While it is clear that Jemison met and spoke with Seaver, it is unknown how involved she was with the editing and publication of her story. As if to anticipate this, Seaver constructs her narrative with careful introductory material, stating in the preface,

“Strict fidelity has been observed in the composition: consequently, no circumstance has been intentionally exaggerated by the paintings of fancy, nor by fine flashes of rhetoric: neither has the picture been rendered more dull than the original. Without the aid of fiction, what was received as matter of fact, only has been recorded” (123). However, Jemison’s narrative contains many “fine flashes of rhetoric” unlikely for an aging woman who spent most her life not speaking English to utter. As Wyss points out, Jemison “is given the voice of a heroine of sentimental fiction” by Seaver in several of his more dramatically constructed passages (68). In remembering her happy childhood interrupted by her family’s capture, readers are to believe that Jemison exclaimed, “But alas! how transitory are all human affairs! how fleeting are riches! how brittle the invisible thread of which all earthly comforts are suspended! (Seaver 133). It is unlikely that Jemison, who had at the time of Seaver’s writing lived a long and happy life with many “human affairs,” “riches,” and “earthly comforts” would reflect as such on her life before captivity. Regardless, there are times in the narrative when Jemison’s influence and voice shines through her transcriber’s words. Her descriptions of the Indians as “strictly honest,” “despis[ing] deception and falsehood,” and “temperate in their desires, moderate in their passions, and candid and honorable in the expression of their sentiments” throughout the text is stated so purposefully and mentioned so often that it likely originated from Jemison’s telling (Seaver 160). Seaver’s openness about his authorship of the text and anticipation of his reader’s questions about its veracity, while not completely satisfying, nevertheless provides an explanation of the choices he made while writing her narrative. He sets up Jemison’s narrative as “a piece of biography,” which he claims is “a telescope of life, through which we can see the extremes and excesses of the varied properties of the human heart” (Seaver 122-23). Here in his preface, Seaver makes

clear that his sole purpose is not to relate only scenes of dramatic and horrific captivity, as is common in many early narratives, but to tell the story of the life of a captive in many of her own words.

Wakefield is named as the author of her text and appears to have much more control over the publication of her story compared to Jemison. Like Seaver, Wakefield decides to explain her writing process in a preface to her narrative, as if anticipating a negative or unbelieving reaction from her audience, explaining, “I do not pretend to be a book-writer,” but, “I have written a *true* statement of my captivity: what I suffered, and what I was spared from suffering,” which makes her readers aware of her dedication to telling the truth, something that defines Wakefield’s story (241). She goes on to give her wishes to the reader, that, “all errors will be overlooked, and that the world will not censure me for speaking kindly of those who saved me from death and dishonor, while my own people were so long – Oh, so long! – in coming to my rescue” (Wakefield 241). Here, Wakefield makes her first jab at her own culture, justifying her relationships with her captors who ultimately protected her when her own people could not. Throughout her narrative, she continues to justify the Indian’s actions, speaking of them in similar ways to Jemison. While she does not identify with the Native people in the same way Jemison does after living most her life among them, Wakefield makes statements such as, “when I hear all the Indians abused, it aggravates me, for I know some are as manly, honest, and noble as our own race” (273). It is statements such as this that mark Wakefield’s text as primarily, if not completely, under her own influence, which her readers would have recognized since, as Derounian-Stodola states, “Her open-mindedness was unusual” (237) for a white woman writing at this time.

Both women give sufficient background information to set up their narrative instead of beginning with their initial capture. This establishes their story as more of a biographical life story instead of a narrative focused only on scenes of captivity. In turn, Jemison and Wakefield's narratives present them as more realistic women who had lives and histories outside of their time in captivity. Unlike Mary Rowlandson's narrative, which begins immediately in the action, "On the tenth of *February*, 1675. came the *Indians* with great numbers upon *Lancaster*" (12), Seaver begins Jemison's narrative telling her history, all the way back to her parents' immigration from Europe. He tells of her happy childhood on the Pennsylvanian frontier until her capture. Jemison's narrative is also unique in that it extends far past her initial time in captivity, covering practically her whole life until the time of her meetings with Seaver. This, along with Seaver's detailed descriptions of Jemison's appearance at the time of his writing in the introduction, develops a clear picture of Jemison as an early American woman before her identity as a captive.

Wakefield too begins her story before her capture, beginning with her arrival at Yellow Medicine with her family a year prior to her captivity. Before giving the details of her captivity, she explains how she grew accustomed to living among the Indians and began developing relationships with them, which later affected her time in captivity. Wakefield explains "I...began to love and respect them as well as if they were whites. I became so much accustomed to them and their ways, that when I was thrown into their hands as prisoner, I felt more easy and contented than any other white person among them" (247). Wakefield also extends her story past her captivity, giving details about how her captivity influenced her future and did not simply end with her release. By extending her narrative to

events occurring in her life in the year following, she continues to represent herself as a real individual, not only a captive.

Jemison and Wakefield use their narrative space to function also as a tribute to the Native American people who feature prominently in their stories. These portions of their narrative are unusual for a captivity narrative as the women shed light on characters other than themselves. Jemison's narrative contains several passages devoted to remembering the lives of others, primarily her family members who have died. She steps back from telling her own story to reflect on their lives and, in a way, immortalize them. Jemison's adult life was full of tragedy, losing two husbands and three of her adult children. When her son John kills her son Thomas, she pauses her narrative to give a brief account of Thomas' life, explaining his strengths, weaknesses, and the highlights of his life. She does the same for her son Jesse, who also dies by John's hand, and finally, for her son John, who is murdered by two Indians. When her second husband Hiokatoo dies, Seaver devotes an entire chapter to remembering his life and accomplishments as a warrior. It appears that remembering these men added to Jemison's reason for telling her story. Showing their impact on her life helps create her identity as part of the Seneca people and gives them a place in early American history. Wakefield's narrative also functions as a tribute to the Indians who help protect her during captivity. As one of her main purposes in writing her narrative was to explain the true story of her relationship with her protector, Chaska features heavily in her text, and Wakefield expresses her gratitude for him and his family throughout her narrative. This takes on a new meaning when we learn that Chaska has died, and like Jemison's, Wakefield's words act as a tribute to his life and in his death, giving him a place in history. In this way, Jemison and

Wakefield give a voice to the Native Americans that shaped their lives in the writing of their narratives.

Uses of the Captivity Narrative

Jemison and Wakefield both walk a fine line of rhetoric in their narratives as they must find balance between telling the truth and having their truth accepted by their readers. This is one reason the captivity narrative works so well as their chosen genre. The captivity narrative was an explosively popular genre, eagerly read by many Americans. Seaver mentions this in his preface, recognizing, “books of this kind are sought and read with avidity” (123). Later in his introduction, Seaver explains the power of the captivity narrative in the minds of his original readers, stating, “The stories of Indian cruelties which were common in the new settlements, and were calamitous realities...slumbered in the minds that had been constantly agitated by them, and were only roused occasionally, to become the fearful topic of the fireside” (125). Publishing a true captivity narrative was almost a guarantee of reaching a wide audience. However, Jemison and Wakefield knew that they would need to use careful explanations in their stories to reveal the truth to white America.

Jemison used the role of the captivity narrative in popular culture to help her achieve her goals in telling her story. Montón recognizes that “Only by submitting to Euro-American discursive forms, only by accepting the conventional presence of a *white male* editor/author who impersonated her to legitimize her revolutionary message” could Jemison tell her story to those she wanted to hear it (84). Her story was one that audiences were very willing to hear, but her position as a woman who embraced the opportunity to become a part of the Seneca people limited her options. Namias points out the difficulty in learning the true story of “those who move between cultures, those who live in two worlds, learning from each,”

like Jemison, and reasons, “There was too much at stake. Those stakes were *us* versus *them*” (201-202). Perhaps this is why Jemison allowed Seaver to set his own goals for her narrative and portray her as an uncivilized victim in portions of the text. Relying on the typical “damsel in distress” characterization, “Seaver expects women to be passive and so he sees Jemison as the victim of a horrible crime, not the willing participant in a culture she has come to admire” (Wyss 68). Jemison is more valuable to Seaver as a victim than a powerful woman, so Seaver begins her narrative with attempts to gain sympathy for “The White Woman” who lived her life, as he claims, without “the blessings of civilization” (127). He sees her life among the Indians as a weakness in the story he wished to tell, noting, “A kind of family pride inclined her to withhold whatever would blot the character of her descendants, and perhaps induced her to keep back many things that would have been interesting” (Seaver 129). Seaver sets up Jemison’s story as one of traditional captivity, experienced by a woman who suffered greatly and who searches for redemption and sympathy in the telling of her story, but Jemison’s story is far from it.

No matter how dire Seaver makes her situation appear, Jemison defies his descriptions in her storytelling. This leads to a competition of sorts in the voice telling her narrative. Michelle Burnham calls this a “bivocalism” that is in constant competition between Jemison and Seaver, but also between the “white captive of the Indians” and the “Indian woman who happens to be white,” which creates an “intercultural product marked by contestation and collaboration between its white male editor and its culturally hybrid female informant” (326-327). Embracing this bivocalism allows for an understanding of the multiple forces at work in allowing Jemison to communicate her message. In the first chapter of her narrative, Seaver writes of Jemison’s recollection of her childhood, quoting her as saying,

“Frequently I dream of those happy days: but, alas! they are gone: they have left me to be carried through a long life, dependent for the little pleasures of nearly seventy years upon the tender mercies of the Indians! (132). Here, it is as if Jemison mourns the life she could have had when considering the lesser life she had with the Indians. However, most of her narrative tells the story of a woman who enjoyed many of life’s pleasures, certainly with more freedom and power than she would have had living in white culture. Jemison was a large landowner, held power among her tribe, and enjoyed the love of her adoptive family. In his introduction, Seaver claims, “her property is sufficient to enable her to dress in the best fashion, and to allow her every comfort in life” (128). Taken as a whole, her life story refuses to classify her as a helpless captive. As Burnham recognizes, “Jemison’s forthright decisions to remain with the Indians rather than be returned to the white settlements simply will not conform to the representation of her as the passive victim of her own life” (337). Her choice to stay with the Indians is a constant reminder of her refusal to follow the sympathies Seaver promotes at the start of the narrative.

In telling her story, Jemison reveals the clash of cultures within herself as both a white and Indian woman. Susan Walsh sees this in the “palpable yearning – to rejoin the old ties severed by violence, to escape the desolation of war and the cataclysm of cultural upheaval, above all, to discover somewhere the possibility of penalty-free traffic between white and red worlds” that “reverberates throughout her story” (56). Having experienced the Native world firsthand, Jemison may feel responsible to use her life story to give a voice to the Indian people. Wyss explains the issues of Native American presence in early American literature, stating, “The question of who defines the Native, and how, becomes complicated when Natives actively participate in a discourse that historically has defined them in their

absence” (63). Living with and essentially becoming a Seneca, Jemison noticed the racial hypocrisy and lies about Native Americans that filled so many texts with authors claiming to have personal experiences with them and therefore chose to provide a voice of experience in her narrative. Namias claims that Seaver’s narrative displays a cultural duality by showing that, “Jemison survived, served as a mediator, judged the bad, and commended the good in both cultures” (203). Ultimately, Jemison used her narrative to fit her own purposes.

Derounian-Stodola comments on Jemison’s control in the narrative, claiming, “Jemison was so thoroughly a Seneca woman that she learned to manipulate and maneuver white cultural practices in order to privilege herself and her adopted culture” (121). She succeeds in providing a story desired by the public but at the same time fulfilling her own desires.

Jemison’s presence in the Seneca tribe was of great interest to many Americans who longed to know what it was like to live among and with the Indians. In fact, this is one reason the captivity narrative remained so popular since, as Annette Kolodny explains, captives “provided their readers with intimate glimpses into the workings of an alien society” (186). Americans knew the story of Jemison would provide much more than a glimpse since she had spent decades becoming acculturated into Seneca society. Walsh explains, “In a sense, during her lifetime Jemison herself had been an enigmatic relic prompting interpretation by score of curious whites” (64). Jemison told her story to give a voice of credible experience to events others were simply making assumptions about, which offered her readers “a more complicated view of captivity than was elsewhere available. For what Jemison made clear was the precariousness of Indian survival under the dual pressures of European diseases and invasion” (Kolodny 193). Seeing firsthand the struggles of the Indians to survive amidst oppression, Jemison must have felt a duty to share since, as an aging woman, Jemison went

out of her way to accommodate Seaver in telling her story. Namias explains her journey to Seaver as, “Beginning with a substantial climb up the steep canyon from her house along the river, eighty-year-old Jemison walked four miles to see Seaver. The climb alone takes fifteen- to twenty-five-minutes” (187). Jemison also had a language barrier, having not spoken English fluently in many years, to which Namias adds, “one wonders if there were things she said in English that would have had a different meaning if said in Seneca” (187). Nevertheless, Jemison found a way to share her experiences with many Americans by utilizing a genre that ensured a captive audience.

Wakefield was also able to use the captivity narrative genre to meet her goals in publishing her narrative. One of those goals was to clear her conscience for her role in Chaska’s imprisonment and eventual death. Namias agrees that her narrative “is a plea for conscience and an attempt to clear her conscience” illustrating “the complex nature of such conscience in the world of Indian-white relations” (257-258). She works through her conscience as she writes her narrative, explaining her actions and thoughts both during and after captivity. Wakefield also relies on the popularity of the captivity narrative to have a chance to tell her side of the story after trying desperately to get others to listen to her. She is all but ignored at Camp Release when she tries to testify for Chaska because, “the Commission was not acting according to justice, but by favor” (Wakefield 303-304). Wakefield is so desperate for someone to listen to her story, she admits that she “said many things I need not have said...making matters worse for Chaska as well as myself” (303-304). This led to fuel the rumors and stories spread about the nature of her relationship with Chaska, lowering her credibility at Chaska’s behalf. She claims, “My object was to excite sympathy for the Indians and in so doing, the soldiers lost all respect for me, and abused me

shamefully” (Wakefield 310). Even Chaska began to blame her for his imprisonment and impending death after her efforts to communicate his goodness. Wakefield eventually convinces him otherwise by telling him that, “I had lost all my friends now by trying to save him, and it was very wrong for him to blame me” (305). After returning home and hearing of Chaska’s hanging, which she is “sure, in my own mind...was done intentionally” (308), Wakefield decided to write her narrative “to vindicate myself, as I have been grievously abused by many, who are ignorant of the particulars of my captivity and release by the Indians” (241). Through her careful construction of her side of the story, she hopes she can gain the sympathy of the American people, regain her status, and bring justice for her Indian protectors.

Wakefield refuses to tell the graphic, brutal story that the officers at Camp Release, and likely many of her original readers, were expecting and wanting to hear. She relates that many other women were changing their original stories to paint the Indians in a negative light and admits to scolding one woman for doing this, explaining, “she was only one of a class of females that were endeavoring to excite the sympathies of the soldiers” (Wakefield 310). Wakefield consistently continues to tell the truth despite the conformity of the other captive women because, “I had rather have my own conscience than that of those persons who turned against their protectors, those that were so kind to them in that great time of peril” (310). The most common offense these women were claiming was the thing that most people assumed and feared when hearing about a captive woman – rape.

Rape and captivity seem to go hand in hand throughout history since, as Kolodny explains, “Ever since the first reported abductions, there had been avid speculation about the sexual fate of female captives” (192). Stefanie Wickstrom goes as far as to say that the

women in captivity narratives “were clearly sexual objects” (191). Many female captivity narratives address this issue to protect the woman’s image of purity and faithfulness. Narratives such as Mary Rowlandson’s and Elizabeth Hanson’s carefully explain the women’s virtue and lack of violation by their captors. Wickstrom explains the trend in stereotyping Indian men in captivity narratives as “ruthless rapists with extraordinary sexual appetites” to which, in response, “white women captives would typically either die heroines resisting Indian sexual advances or be rescued by Euroamerican men (176). For Wakefield, neither of these options defined her captivity. Instead, she claims her relationship with Chaska was purely a platonic friendship, something inconceivable to most upon her return. When she arrives at Camp Release, soldiers instruct Wakefield to relate “anything more of a private nature” to an officer and she explains, “They thought it very strange I had no complaints to make, but did not appear to believe me” (301). Just like Jemison, Wakefield is more valuable to the world if she becomes a victim instead of a woman making her own choices, but she refuses to play that role. She then investigates the frequent accusations of rape herself, explaining, “I do not know of but two females that were abused by the Indians. I often asked the prisoners when we met, for we were hearing all kinds of reports, but they all said they were well treated, that I saw” (Wakefield 304). Wakefield hopes that by writing her narrative, more people will realize how false rape assumptions are and recognize the truth in her side of the story.

The hesitations Wakefield must have felt in crafting a narrative so forthright in its message are clear in the sense of urgency she writes with as she pleads with her readers to hear her truth. Dean likens this to the limitations Wakefield felt while writing in such an established genre, in that, “she becomes increasingly absorbed with the underlying question

of how to be heard in a discourse that will not accommodate her alternative version of events. The result is a text in which anxieties of representation threaten to overwhelm the author” (97). Wakefield reveals this in her constant and overly-thorough explanations that pause her narrative while she clarifies statements to avoid misrepresentation. These clarifications often seem added with lack of confidence or in a sort of paranoia, acting as a means of defense from future harassment from the public. When Wakefield arrives at Camp Release only to face miserable conditions, she states, “I wished many times I had a tepee to sleep in. Now I wish to be distinctly understood in this remark: I did not wish myself back in a tepee, I only wanted the comforts of one” (299). She also feels the need to justify her own reactions to her readers. In explaining her extreme fear when in hiding during her captivity, she pauses to explain, “Many persons who may read this may think I was foolish in giving away to my fears, but you cannot tell what you would do or how you would feel...Can anyone imagine how I suffered? No! they can not” (259-260). Direct communication with readers is common in the captivity narrative genre, but for Wakefield, it goes beyond asking for empathy and instead allows her to plead with her readers.

After feeling she has done all she can do, Wakefield ends her narrative with hopes for its success. She leaves her story in the hands of God, “trusting that in God’s own time I will be righted and my conduct understood, for with Him all things are plain,” and then concludes “I will bid this subject farewell forever” (Wakefield 313). Dean explains that, “True to her word, Wakefield apparently made no more attempts to make her story heard...her obituary memorialized her not as a witness or author but as ‘a Prisoner of the Sioux’” (115). Further, as Wickstrom notes, “Wakefield did not become a popular heroine and her captivity story was not a big seller during her lifetime due to her vilification as an Indian lover” (180).

Wakefield did not see the full effect of her efforts to tell the truth come to fruition and likely died still holding the weight of injustice and guilt that led her to publish her narrative in the first place. Dean adds that “Wakefield’s version of events...was disregarded in popular history” (98) because her “story of cross-racial and cross-cultural cooperation disrupted the dominant narrative in unacceptable ways” which meant that Wakefield “apparently had to print and promote her book herself” (102-103). Wakefield’s story was dangerous to the United States government who was arguing for the death and decimation of the Native Americans in part due to their reported aggression and sexual violence against women. Her dismissal by the public, and Chaska’s fate, then, are due to a larger political movement set on controlling the master narrative of what happened during the Dakota Conflict and in “shaping a history of white-Indian relations on the U.S. borderlands” (Dean 107). Nonetheless, Wakefield’s narrative holds importance today for her descriptions of the war and her experiences among the Dakota people. Namias argues that in fact Wakefield’s narrative was popular among some readers, noting that the surviving original copies show that it was, like many other captivity texts, “read to pieces” (238). While she may not have been justified in her lifetime, her efforts to give a voice to the Native American people were, like Jemison’s, eventually realized and appreciated.

Transformation of Captivity: Development of Relationships

Both Jemison and Wakefield develop relationships with the Native Americans responsible for their separation from their family. In this, they reverse the traditional captivity narrative, since, as Wyss explains, “In the captivity narrative transformation is to be feared and struggled against, and, while the captivity narrative celebrates the captive’s strength in that struggle, the underlying problem remains the *possibility* of cultural

conversion or transformation” (67). Conversely, Jemison and Wakefield allow their relationships to transform their lives and identities, influencing their future after captivity. While neither woman befriends the actual Indians that mistreat them or harm their family, their close relationships with the Native Americans responsible for their separation from their home culture set them apart from many other captive women.

After her initial capture, Jemison quickly adapts to Indian life. At first, it is because she has no other option. She was “without the power or means of escaping; without a home to go to, even if I could be liberated; without a knowledge of the direction of distance to my former place of residence; and without a living friend to whom to fly for protection” (Seaver 137). Her captors had killed her parents and siblings, leaving her at their mercy for survival. After her captors give her to her two Seneca sisters, Jemison develops a stronger identity with the Indians as they adopt her into their tribe. Wyss comments on Jemison’s adoption process, deeming it a “moment of emotional and spiritual crisis” that results in “a moment of conversion” (70). Jemison, no longer without a family, is given all means of protection and comfort to meet her needs with her new sisters. However, Seaver reveals that her captivity experience did not end here, as Jemison still longed at times to return to white society. When she meets a group of white people shortly after, Seaver claims she is upset that her sisters do not allow her to “go home with them, and share in the blessings of civilization” for, “My second departure and escape from them, seemed like a second captivity” (Seaver 146). Not long after this, Jemison’s sisters encourage her to marry her first husband, Sheninjee. She states that it was “with a great degree of reluctance” that she married him, but that “The idea of spending my days with him, at first seemed perfectly irreconcilable to my feelings: but his good nature, generosity, tenderness, and friendship towards me, soon gained my affection;

and, strange as it may seem, I loved him!” (Seaver 147). Her marriage to Sheninjee begins her full transformation to Seneca life. Walsh explains the nature of this scene, stating, “Acutely aware of white prejudice against miscegenation, Jemison – and/or Seaver – emphasizes her reluctance in marrying her first husband Sheninjee...Jemison’s professed hesitation may have reflected, in part, a sharp grasp of how marriage and its offspring would ineluctably bind her to the Senecas, with whom she had lived for little more than two years” (54). This is a major step in Jemison’s assimilation to Indian life and transformation into a Seneca identity.

Jemison’s continued relationships with her adoptive family essentially end her time spent in captivity. After spending four years with the Indians and giving birth to a son, she describes, “my anxiety to get away, to be set at liberty, and leave them, had almost subsided. With them was my home; my family was there” (Seaver 148). A few years later, after Sheninjee’s death, Jemison sees a chance for redemption but claims, “I did not want to be redeemed at that time” (Seaver 156). The Seneca chiefs then ordered “that I should not be taken to any military post without my consent; and that as it was my choice to stay, I should live amongst them quietly and undisturbed” (Seaver 157). Her refusal to leave her home with the Indians “cemented Jemison’s identity as a Seneca woman and made a return to white society less desirable or even viable” (Derounian-Stodola 119). Many critics claim that this marks her narrative not as a captivity narrative but a biography or some sort of combination of the genres. Castiglia deems it a “narrative of acculturation” (37) while Wyss claims it is a “tale of conversion” which “constantly ruptures the rhetoric of captivity” (72). Regardless of definition, it is clear that Jemison is no longer a captive at the moment she has complete freedom to leave but chooses to stay. Her subsequent marriage to Hiokatoo and birth of six

more children influences her choice to deny visiting her relatives later in life. She worries for her children, that her family would “despise them, if not myself; and treat us as enemies; or, at least with a degree of cold indifference, which I thought I could not endure” (178). At this point in her narrative, Jemison had spent most of her life with her Seneca family, living in a “matrilineal community where women participated in war councils, elected and deposed chiefs, and officiated at ceremonial occasions” (Walsh 52). The tribe privileged Jemison with many freedoms, including owning her own land, and there she continued to live out her days among the Seneca people.

Wakefield’s relationships with the Indians are more ambiguous as she, while defending them at times, still demonstrates her discrimination in her writing. Wickstrom claims Wakefield’s general attitude toward Native Americans was that “even though they were culturally inferior to Anglos, Indians could be good people” (191). She displays mixed emotions regarding the Indians, wavering between acceptance and dismissal. Dean explains, “Wakefield suggests that her particular perspective as one who lives among and admires the Dakota allows her insights into the true nature of the Dakota people,” but that “her oscillation between biased and unbiased perception threatens to destabilize her position as eyewitness” (111-112). At times, Wakefield rises in defense of the Native Americans, such as when she claims, “if all these Indians had been properly fed and otherwise treated like human beings, how many, very many innocent lives might have been spared” (248). Yet at other places, Wakefield refers to them as “filthy, nasty, greasy Indians” (242) and gives them a lowered, primal depiction, like in her claim, “That is the only way the wild Indian can be kept quiet, by just filling them with food; for if before eating they feel like fighting, they eat so ravenously that they have to sleep, and then they forget all during their slumbers” (246). She

admits her limitations in observing the Indians due to “the ways her own perception is limited by the stories that circulated in her life before captivity” (Dean 113) and may have included the racist undertones in her text to make her story “comprehensible in the context of the dominant understanding of race relations in the west” (Dean 115). It may be another example of how far Wakefield felt she must go for the public to hear her story. However, Wakefield’s final actions with Chaska might prove the limitations of her acceptance. After fighting so hard to clear Chaska’s name following his conviction for murder and her unsuccessful attempt to testify for him, she decides to leave Camp Release before his fate is decided. When she hears that “Chaska would not be executed, but would be imprisoned for five years” Wakefield claims she “was very well contented, and troubled myself no farther” (305). While she expresses her guilt over Chaska’s eventual death, Wakefield knows she did not do all she could to save him. Her loyalty to him did not last far beyond her captivity. The decision to return home and restore her normal life despite Chaska’s unresolved future exposes Wakefield’s priorities.

Wakefield’s relationship with Chaska is perhaps her greatest transformation and lies at the center of her narrative. She sees him as her protector, which she uses to justify her intimate relationship with him. As she explains, “I am particular in relating every interview I had with him, as many false and slanderous stories are in circulation about me” (303). As the scandal that created many of the problems leading to her publishing of her text, Wakefield is careful in the way she approaches her descriptions of her relationship with Chaska while also making clear his role in her survival. Chaska is with Wakefield from the beginning of her captivity when he saves her from Hapa, his brother-in-law, who kills Mr. Gleason, the man who was driving Wakefield to safety (and, incidentally, the man Chaska is accused of

murdering). Throughout her captivity, Chaska takes care of Wakefield and her children, even pretending to take her as a wife to protect her against all the Indians who want her dead. While he lies down with her at night, Wakefield assures her readers that a sexual relationship never transpired between them, claiming, “My father could not have done differently, or acted more respectful or honorable...Very few Indians, or *even white men*, would have treated me in the manner he did” (271). She continuously defines their relationship in ways that mark it platonic. When Wakefield learns of Chaska’s imprisonment, she claims, “I felt as bad as if my brother had been in the same position” (302) and later states, “I loved not the man, but his kindly acts” (309). Namias argues that Wakefield’s purpose in this was to show her readers how much Chaska was like the whites, as “more ‘us’ than ‘them’” (225), in an attempt to clear her name from public scrutiny. Of course, Chaska was not spared from public response in the aftermath of his relationship with Wakefield. His unintentional death, presumed to occur due to a spelling error of his name, likely had more to do with his involvement with a white woman. Namias claims that Chaska would not have been a stranger to the officers in charge of the execution of thirty-eight Indian prisoners and that the “mistake” of his inclusion in the execution was likely due to his relationship with Wakefield (237, 258). While Wakefield did not show the same respect to all Indians, her intimate relationship with Chaska likens her transformation to Jemison’s in that it changed her life forever.

Exposing White Exceptionalism

Jemison and Wakefield both voice their disapproval of the poor treatment of the Native Americans in their narratives. They use their narratives to debunk the misinformation generated by the dominant white culture to induce fear and hatred of the Native Americans in

its people. The threat of close encounters with the Indians was brimming in the minds of many other Americans since, as Wickstrom mentions, “Enough captive Anglos, especially children, had successfully and happily acculturated to life in American Indian communities to raise doubts about the inherent superiority of civilization and the power of god to deliver Christians from the clutches of savagery” (173). Jemison and Wakefield challenge white male authority in their exposure of the myth of its protection against the people they come to grow close with. Both Jemison and Wakefield begin to realize this when they consider the acceptance the Indians extend to them compared to the way most of white culture treats the Indians in return. After her adoption, Jemison says she was “made welcome amongst them as a sister” and “was ever considered and treated by them as a real sister, the same as though I had been born of their mother” (Seaver 143-144). Wakefield too is accepted by the Indians, especially Chaska and his family, who protect her due to her willingness to work with them instead of fight against them. She does this based on some advice early in her captivity to “not mistrust them; make them think I had confidence in them, and they would soon learn to love and respect me” (Wakefield 256). While Wakefield does not defend the Indians as confidently as Jemison, she too takes issue with their treatment and representation.

Adding to Jemison’s decision to stay is her realization of the flaws in the dominant white culture once she leaves it. She is unable to accept the automatic assumption that the culture of her childhood is superior to the one she spent most of her life in. Castiglia states that life with the Indians offered “white women physical, matrimonial, and economic space” otherwise unknown in white culture (36). Jemison was certainly not the only captive that felt the freedom of Indian culture and chose to stay. Despite what white culture wanted other Americans to believe, Jemison’s narrative shows that, as Castiglia explains, “Far from

resulting in the transformation of women into savages, ‘masculinized’ females, or helpless victims, the acculturation of women captives enabled them to alter their racial, national, and gender identities” (37). Jemison consistently defends her people in response to the assumptions of her readers. In discussing the discrimination of the Indians as violent, Jemison says that from what she has witnessed, “it is a fact that they are naturally kind, tender and peaceable towards their friends, and strictly honest; and that those cruelties have been practiced, only upon their enemies, according to their idea of justice” (Seaver 150). Jemison often gives responsibility to white culture for the problems of the Indians. She claims, “The use of ardent spirits amongst the Indians and the attempts which have been made to civilize and christianize them by the white people, has constantly made them worse and worse; increased their vices, and robbed them of many of their virtues; and will ultimately produce their extermination” (Seaver 149). She is unapologetic in her defense of her adoptive family against the culture of her birth throughout her narrative, which would likely have been an unfamiliar shock to her original readers – something she undoubtedly expected would draw their attention to her claims.

Wakefield too sees the flaws of the dominant white culture once she experiences life among the Indians. Her continued development of her relationships with the Dakota Indians transforms the attitudes imposed on her by the dominant culture, and “leads Wakefield to revise her belief in the innate superiority – or commonality – of all whites” (Castiglia 53). This leads Wakefield to act as an advocate for the Native people in the time following her captivity and in publishing her narrative. Castiglia likens Wakefield’s experience to Rowlandson’s in their criticisms of “the inadequacies of the ‘protection’” of their home cultures which makes their return difficult, “experiencing their difference from other whites

and, arguably, some longing for the Indian society they have left behind” (55). Throughout her narrative, Wakefield comments on the slowness of those coming for her redemption, explaining that even the Indians commented that, “the white people did not care much about their wives and children or they would have hurried on faster” (291). Her time in captivity waiting for a slow-coming rescue allows her to question the amount of protection her people can provide. She compares this with the treatment she received while in captivity where the Indians treated her very kindly and generously, providing her many comforts. After her redemption, Wakefield criticizes the lack of welcome hospitality she faces at Camp Release where “We nearly suffocated for want of air” and “We suffered much for want of bedding, for there was no provision made for us, although they were so many weeks preparing for a start to rescue us” (299). Indian life proves superior for Wakefield in these moments, and, although she chooses to return to her white culture and family, it is not an easy transition. Castiglia explains, “Far from depicting the home culture as a haven of liberty, happiness, and ease, captives like Wakefield often represent ‘rescue’ as the beginning of even greater trials” (67). Many of these trials come in the events Wakefield illustrates at the end of her narrative while others occur after the publication of her narrative. Namias comments on the social, psychological, and physical changes Wakefield endured during and after captivity that affected her life after she published her narrative, proving that “the costs for this public stance were great” (245, 260). Namias also claims that Wakefield’s peers forever suspected her of being disloyal in loving Chaska more than her husband, John, who died of a likely suicide only ten years after she published her narrative (248). Although Wakefield is redeemed in that she returns to her family, the effects of her captivity and her choice to speak in favor of the Indians would continue to influence the rest of her life.

Like Jemison, Wakefield calls for a change in the treatment of Indians by the dominant white culture after experiencing their hardships firsthand. She states, “Another year the scenes of the two last years will be repeated, and this war will be prolonged for many, many years, unless we have a change of officers” (Wakefield 312). Wakefield asserts that although the Indians are condemned for their violence against the whites, “I cannot blame them as many do, for I am sure they had cause, and very strong reasons for being revenged on some persons who have been living off their lands and money, while they were starving...they took the only way they knew of getting restitution and we all want that when we are wronged” (296). By asking her readers to empathize with the Indians by considering their position and treatment, she gives the Indians a humanity unseen in many captivity texts. She even goes as far as to claim, in discussing the violence of the Indians, “our own people, not the Indians, were to blame” (286). Her advocacy for the Indians is not only meant to stir up action, but also to reverse prejudices and stereotypes held by the whites. Castiglia credits Wakefield’s narrative as “reveal[ing] much about how white women received and reshaped cultural discourses disseminated and manifested on the shifting American frontiers” (57). In her personal experience of the Dakota Conflict, Wakefield sees an opportunity to speak well of the Indians and try to change their treatment and future. While her commitment to the Indians is much less than that of Jemison, Wakefield’s testament to their goodness in her narrative, however skewed by her concern for appealing to white culture, shows the transformative power of time spent apart from one’s own culture.

Conclusion

Jemison and Wakefield stand apart from the captivity narrative tradition in their ability to use their text to share a message with America, one that promotes acceptance of

Native Americans in showing the transformation of two women who experience life among them. Beginning as outsiders entering Indian culture, Jemison and Wakefield open their lives and allow for a revolution that encourages them to tell their story. Both refuse to cater to the desires of the dominant culture by publicly speaking against it. They also refuse to gain sympathy by playing the victim as many other women did. While Seaver's interference in Jemison's story and Wakefield's oscillating defense of the Indians may make it seem as if these women did not go far enough in their tributes to those that protected them, Pearce reminds us that in considering captivity narratives, "what is important is what the narrative was for the readers for whom it was written" (1). Ultimately, what Jemison and Wakefield were able to do in their narratives was radically different from the women who narrated captivity experiences before them, opening the door for the many that would follow.

CHAPTER III

AMERICAN GOTHIC CAPTIVITY AND THE CIVIL WAR: HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD'S "CIRCUMSTANCE"

Harriet Prescott Spofford's 1860 short story "Circumstance" stands as a notable example of one of the first American Frontier Gothic stories. Set in colonial Maine, Spofford integrates many American Gothic elements in her story such as a focus on fear and the American wilderness. In the introduction to his anthology of American Gothic literature, which includes a publication of "Circumstance," Charles L. Crow asserts that for American writers, "the Gothic offered a way to explore areas otherwise denied the" and goes on to claim, "If the national story of the United States has been one of faith in progress and success and in opportunity for the individual, Gothic literature can tell the story of those who are rejected, oppressed, or who have failed" (2). This convention of Gothic literature makes the genre appealing to a wide range of authors wishing to write about complex issues they see in their culture while using the Gothic genre to situate and account for the themes included. For Spofford, writing at a time in American history full of conflict as the country teetered on the brink of civil war, the Gothic genre allowed her to explore and comment on American tensions in a subtle yet illuminating way. While "Circumstance," on the surface, is about a time and family long before the Civil War, it is a rich and layered text with connections to the world of Spofford's original readers, exploring tensions faced by both halves of the country.

While Spofford's story certainly fits within the Gothic genre, upon further inspection, "Circumstance" also fits into another timeless literary trope – the American women's

captivity narrative. Matthew Wynn Sivils makes the connection between the Gothic and the captivity narrative clear when he describes the Frontier Gothic genre resulting from a “melding of Indian captivity tales, local history, wilderness environments, and select conventions of European works” (84). Typical captivity narratives begin with an unexpected and violent capture, followed by a time of discomfort and distress while in captivity, and end with a redemption and return to society. Similarly, Spofford’s story centers on the capture of her unnamed heroine by an “Indian Devil,” a repressed Other whose description resembles a panther, lurking in the wilderness, and her life-threatening and anxiety-filled captivity ends with her eventual redemption. Spofford chose to use elements from the American Gothic and captivity narrative genres, both of which allow for the representation of the otherwise unspeakable, in “Circumstance” to comment on the nation’s disparity before the outbreak of war.

While Spofford’s “Circumstance” has not been widely analyzed, a few critics have associated it with the captivity narrative. Lisa Logan, for example, looks at the connection most directly in her discussion of various similarities in how the home, wilderness, and what is “safe” are portrayed in both captivity narratives and “Circumstance.” Logan’s analysis focuses primarily on the physical spaces in both Spofford’s text and selected captivity narratives. Theresa Strouth Gaul also mentions the story’s connections to captivity narratives, focusing primarily on similarities in sexuality and motherhood as well as the heroine’s transformation into a new version of herself while in captivity, much like captive women who return as different versions of themselves. Eric Gary Anderson also briefly mentions “Circumstance” in an article focusing on captivity and freedom, discussing how much the captivity narrative genre influenced American texts and pointing out the unique way that in

Spofford's text, "the identities of the story and the storyteller merge, and that the captivity narrative is capable of enacting what it describes – capable of taking readers captive in ways that stretch well beyond sheer, or mere, entertainment" (350). Michael Grimwood provides an interesting addition to the "Circumstance" conversation in his article about how readers viewed the story in 1860, commenting on the religious and racial issues at the time that would have made original readers focus on these elements in Spofford's story more than current readers might. In this chapter, I will explore how Spofford overlaps elements of the American Gothic and captivity narrative genres in her story to connect her readers' cultural situation with that of the lives of captives in early America.

Spectral Experience: A Central Gothic Element

Uncanny and unfamiliar characters and situations mark the Gothic genre. Crow notes, "The key moment in a Gothic work will occur at the point of boundary crossing or revelation, when something hidden or unexpressed is revealed, and we experience the shock of an encounter which is both unexpected and expected" (1). It is the mixing of the familiar with unfamiliar, the known with the unknown, that creates the uncanny. In the Gothic genre, few things, if any, are certain, and, as Crow explains, "Within a Gothic work, there is usually a confusion of good and evil, as conventionally defined" (1). The idea of situating a story with a hero and a villain is certainly not unusual or confined to the Gothic. However, Gothic stories often display multiple facets of a character's persona, leaving the reader to determine where a character may fall on the villain to hero spectrum. Characters think and act in ways that often seem contradictory or unexpected. In Spofford's story, for example, her heroine, the heroine's husband, and the captor all vary in their degrees of good and evil, all act in unexpected ways, and all play different roles in Spofford's story of redemption. The Civil

War itself has many similarities to Gothic conventions. As Crow also explains, “In the Gothic, taboos are often broken, forbidden secrets are spoken, and barriers are crossed” (1). These three conventions are synonymous with the act of war, especially a civil war, and give a clear reason for Spofford to situate her story in the Gothic genre.

A classic American Gothic literature theme is that of the supernatural, most often in spectral experiences or visions. In his preface to the story, Crow states, “‘Circumstance’ allegedly was based on a story passed down within the author’s family. It is a frontier Gothic story, an uncanny encounter in the wilderness” (194). Spofford positions “Circumstance” as a Gothic story in the initial scene of “Circumstance” while also connecting it to the captivity narrative genre. While walking home from a neighbor’s house at dusk, Spofford’s nameless protagonist sees “a winding-sheet, – cold, white, and ghastly, waved by the likeness of four wan hands, – that rose with a long inflation, and fell in rigid folds” (206). She hears the voice calling to her in a “spectral and melancholy voice,” yet afterwards “she looked about her, shook her shoulders decidedly, and, pulling on her hood, went forward once more” (Spofford 206). Spofford proves that her heroine is a strong woman, “not of the screaming kind” (207), and that due to her life on the frontier, the spectral figure she sees does not bother her, although it alludes to something much worse to come. The narrator uses supernatural language later in her story when describing the heroine in her near-death encounter with her captor. Spofford describes the heroine’s singing in an “unearthly key” and her body “so ghastly white, so rigid, so stained with blood, her eyes so fixedly bent above, and her lips, that had indurated into the chiseled pallor of marble, parted only with that flood of solemn song” (213). In this scene, the heroine takes on a spectral appearance as she nears death, adding to the Gothic ambiance of the story.

The purpose of Spofford's spectral opening scene goes beyond identifying the story as fitting within the American Gothic genre. Readers familiar with Mary Jemison's 1824 captivity narrative might see Spofford's opening scene as an omen for the unfortunate circumstances left to transpire. Jemison's text depicts a similar scene when a young Jemison goes "to a neighbor's house" and at "the beginning of the evening...saw a sheet wide spread approaching towards me, in which I was caught (as I have ever since believed) and deprived of my senses! (Seaver 133). Jemison initially gives more significance to the event than Spofford's heroine does and sees the event as an ominous "forerunner of the melancholy catastrophe that so soon afterwards happened to our family" (Seaver 133). Jemison recognizes the spectral experience as a negative sign, at least in retrospect, and allows it to comment on the nature of her captivity. Sivils says this scene in Jemison's narrative "creates a sense of the uncanny that unsettles the narrative's placement in reality while adding confusion and suspense" (91), which adds to the clear Gothic undertones of this scene. Spofford's use of a seemingly supernatural vision in her introductory scene allows her readers, who would likely be familiar with scenes from Jemison's popular narrative published less than forty years before, to draw connections between the two stories and heroines.

The captivity narrative genre itself does not typically include scenes of supernatural occurrences, but it is a genre fueled by the haunting of the American conscience, which adds an otherworldly element to their stories. Sivils deems captivity narratives, "a literature...of a haunted national psyche...formed by centuries of injustices against Native Americans" (85). In addition, the genre often uses supernatural intercessions when its captives cry out to God for help and attribute their capture as well as their redemption to God's will or power. In this

way, captivity narratives, and many of their readers, support the involvement of the supernatural in life on Earth, making it an apt example of the overlap between the two genres that Spofford balances in “Circumstance.”

Demonized Captors: Representing the Repressed Other

Spofford’s Indian Devil, the captor in “Circumstance,” functions as a repressed Other, and has numerous similarities to the Native American captors in early captivity narratives. Spofford identifies the captor as “that wild beast – the most savage and serpentine and subtle and fearless of our latitudes – known by hunters as the Indian Devil” (207). Much like Native American captors, the narrator describes the Indian Devil as a “savage” and “wild beast” who is violent, voiceless, and ready to decimate its victim. The captor is not able to articulate words to communicate with its captive, but instead uses violence and animalistic gruntings to force her to act according to its demands. Most critics agree that the beast Spofford describes is a panther, and Gaul provides an explanation of why the panther becomes the perfect symbol in the story, explaining that the panther existed as “one of the most dreaded predators of the eastern seaboard, associated with the terrors of the wilderness by the early colonists, and hunted nearly to extinction by the time Spofford was writing” (39). Spofford’s inclusion of a panther-like figure has clear links to the American Gothic literary tradition where panthers, and most notably the violent killing of panthers, abound.

The image of Spofford’s Indian Devil echoes the descriptions of Native American captors in many captivity narratives. Mary Rowlandson gives a devilish description of her captors in her text, saying, “Oh the roaring, and singing, and dancing, and yelling of those black creatures in the night, which made the place a lively resemblance of hell” (14). Her focus on the darkness of her captors at night mirrors the “swift shadow” of the Indian Devil

Spofford describes (207). Cotton Mather, in Hannah Dustan's captivity narrative, describes the Native Americans as "raging Dragons" (58), just as Spofford refers to the beast in her story as a "fabulous flying-dragon" (207). Even Wakefield, who has much more respect for her Native American captors compared to earlier women captives, describes her first night near them as a "horror" due to their "talking, shouting and screaming all night" in that "we, poor, ignorant mortals, thought they were signing our death-song, preparatory to destroying us" (244). Wakefield later asks her readers to "think of a woman at any time, lying in the woods alone, all night" just as she was, with "devils incarnate...rushing around, seeking whom they might devour!" (260). These nighttime scenes hold many similarities to the night Spofford's heroine endures in the wilderness among the panthers, Native Americans, and the infamous Indian Devil. Similarly, in Abraham Panther's fictional captivity story, the man who holds the woman captive, while not a Native American, is "a man of gigantic figure" who speaks "in a language I did not understand" (88-89), paralleling the image of the animalistic Indian Devil. Spofford uses language and descriptions from popular captivity narratives to describe her captor, allowing her readers to draw further connections between her story and the genre.

Spofford combines animalistic characteristics with human actions in her descriptions of the captor to intensify the importance of the figure. Spofford describes the creature "*holding* her in his great lithe embrace" (207, my emphasis), which is not an action typically associated with animals. Furthermore, Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau call Spofford's captor a "man" rather than an animal (161), which likens the beast even more to the human captors in traditional captivity narratives and follows Spofford's use of the pronoun "he" instead of "it" when referring to the captor. However, Spofford's descriptions

of the captor as a “wild beast” with “long sharp claws,” “white tusks,” and “eyes glaring through all the darkness like balls of red fire” (207) point to a primarily animalistic creature as her captor, at least in appearance, aligning with the language used to describe captivity narrative captors. Considering Spofford’s name for the captor, the Indian Devil, Carol Holly describes the connection between the captors of early captivity narratives and “Circumstance,” saying, “The term that describes the panther who holds the woman captive, ‘Indian Devil,’ conflates the beast’s predatory designs with those of native people and associates the people themselves with the devil” (160). Spofford herself connects the similar dangers of both the Native American and panther when she explains that the heroine’s home laid before “a wilderness untrodden save by stealthy native or deadly panther tribes” (206). She also describes the beast’s moment of death as a “terrible yell of desperation” that “filled her [the heroine’s] ears with savage echoes” (214), likening the auditory death of the Indian Devil to a Native American war cry. Spofford confines both the panther and the Native American to the dark and dangerous wilderness where the Indian Devil, a creature that mixes stereotypical characteristics of both, lies in wait for its victims. Ultimately, Spofford’s use of a captor similar to those found in captivity narratives connects the Gothic captor with the Native American captor and allows for a reassessment of the repressed Other.

The Native Americans portrayed at the end of Spofford’s story present another demonized villain in the text. When the heroine and her husband return home, they witness “the log-house, the barns, the neighboring farms, the fences...all blotted out and mingled in one smoking ruin” (Spofford 214). And what or who is responsible for the demolition of their village? Spofford explains, “Tomahawk and scalping-knife, descending during that night, had left behind them only this work of their accomplished hatred” (214). Just as they appear

to have a happy ending, the heroine and her family witness the complete decimation of their home. Spofford chooses to end her story in a scene similar to the raids by Native Americans that begin many captivity narratives, such as those of Rowlandson, Dustan, and Jemison. The heroine quickly recognizes, “There is no home there...Desolation and death were indeed there” (Spofford 214). The removal from the home, and the forced discomfort and uncertainty that comes with it, is a trademark of the captivity narrative genre. The inclusion of Native Americans destroying the heroine’s village means that, had the family been home, another type of captivity may have ensued. If Spofford’s readers had not yet made the connection between her story and the captivity narrative genre, her final scene illuminates the link.

Repression of Male Agency

In her heroine’s husband, the primary male character in “Circumstance,” Spofford reverses the stereotypical male role. Captivity narrators often subtly included similar reversals in their stories. In a study of Spofford’s short fiction texts, Birgit Spengler states, “the characters in some of Spofford’s best stories negotiate power and gender relations and...typical gender roles are subverted” (71). This situation certainly exists in “Circumstance” where the husband is left at home through most of the story caring for the baby, watching over the home, and portraying a more maternal and feminine role. The heroine imagines him “rising and opening the door, looking out after her, and wondering at her absence” (Spofford 208). The husband acts quite passively in his wife’s mind as she suffers in her captivity, not demonstrating confidence or the ability to take action. She later wonders “why her husband was not up and abroad to find her,” and Spofford states bluntly, “He failed her, – her one sole hope in life” (210). She no longer has hope that her husband

will save her, and his inability to be dependable damages her trust in him. When he finally does decide to go looking for his wife, Spofford depicts the scene as a combination of both his masculine and feminine sides as he holds both child and gun in his arms (212). Even in his quest for his wife's redemption, Spofford combines feminine and masculine in her depiction of the husband.

At the moment the heroine sees that her husband has come to save her, he is rendered powerless. He realizes the beast holds her in such a way that a fatal shot would have to go through his wife's body before it could strike her captor, and, as Spofford adds, "the light was too uncertain for his aim. So he waited" (213). Instead of acting to redeem his wife, the husband waits in submission to her captor. His inability to control the Indian Devil not only lessens his authority in the story but would also have cultural meaning for Spofford's readers. Gaul notes the importance of the killing of panthers at this time, saying, "This was an animal whose agility and power had given it special status with American Indians, and whose ritual killing was a symbol of status and masculinity for white American men" (39). The killing of panthers at this time equated to the male agency gained through domination of the Native Americans. While a shot from her husband's gun ultimately redeems her, it is the action of the Indian Devil, who changes its hold on the heroine, that truly saves her life and allows for her salvation, further undermining the man's authority and power. Even after the beast dies, it still acts to save the heroine. As she falls from her captor's grip, in a "wide arc of some eternal descent," "the beast fell under her," breaking her fall and saving her yet again. Finally, as mentioned before, the heroine's encounter in the wilderness prevented her family from being home during the Native American attack. Due to its capture of the heroine, the Indian Devil is responsible for preserving the heroine and her family from further harm.

The final scene in “Circumstance” transpires perhaps as the greatest example of the heroine’s authority in the story as she saves her family from the destruction awaiting them at home. While her husband walks before her, she “lingers over a singular foot-print in the snow, stoops and examines it, then looks up with a hurried word” (Spofford 214). In reaction, Spofford notes that the husband drops his gun as he holds the child, rendering him defenseless and bringing back a more maternal role for him. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola recognizes that women’s captivity narratives often, “targeted women’s physical frailty and emotional nature” (xxi). Spofford at times adheres to this trope within “Circumstance” as her heroine struggles in the grasp of her captor and suffers from a parched throat and weary consciousness, but after her captivity, the heroine overcomes her frail, emotional state, can leave the scene on her own two feet, and remains cognizant enough to recognize details in her surroundings that save her family from the destruction and danger awaiting them at home. Ultimately, the husband shows a reliance on his wife and does not become a true redeemer in the story.

Many American women’s captivity narratives also, though more discreetly, show a lack of white male power. For example, Derounian-Stodola mentions that in Panther’s captivity narrative, “The unnamed woman displaces and survives all the male characters in the story who failed or tried to harm her: her father, her fiancé, the Indians, and the giant” (xxiii). While the woman in Panther’s narrative relies on men to bring her out of isolation, it ultimately becomes her choice to return to her father. In Hannah Dustan’s narrative, Cotton Mather represents Dustan’s husband in a maternal role like Spofford’s portrayal of her heroine’s husband. When the Native Americans attack their home, “he ran out after his Children; resolving that on the Horse which he had with him, he would Ride away with *That*

which he should in this Extremity find his Affections to pitch most upon, and leave the rest unto the Care of the Divine Providence” (Mather 58). Dustan’s husband leaves her to save their children, and while Mather justifies her husband’s actions by pointing out that he was relying on God to save his wife, Mather does not hide her husband’s maternal qualities in what follows in the narrative. The husband decides to “Live and Die” with his “*Little Army of Unarmed Children*” and suffers in the “Agony of his Parental Affections” during the attack (Mather 58). It is also notable that the male character does not return in this story but that Mather ends the story with Dustan redeeming herself from captivity without the aid of a male authority figure. Mary Rowlandson’s husband also remains largely missing from her narrative. When it comes to the redemption of Rowlandson, her husband’s actions do not cause fear in her captors who are only interested in his money. Rowlandson actually helps her captors decide that, “for twenty pounds, I should be redeemed” (38). It does not matter where this money comes from, but only that a payment must occur for Rowlandson’s captors to release her; therefore, it is the ransom that saves Rowlandson, not her husband. In the narratives of both Dustan and Rowlandson, the husband figures are not able to save the women in the initial attack, making them appear powerless from the beginning as the women must fend for themselves to stay alive. Further, the redemption of the women occurs independent from their husband’s actions, which Spofford echoes in “Circumstance” as she makes this depiction of male powerlessness even more evident than the captivity narratives she relies upon.

Avenues of Female Expression

Spofford also invokes the captivity narrative in the way her heroine expresses herself and uses her voice throughout the story, creating a break from the traditional “damsel in

distress” found in many Gothic stories. While Spofford frames the story as a tale told within a family, Susan Opfermann notes, “The tale contains not a line of dialogue” (175). Most of the words we know the woman articulates are positioned within the lyrics she sings to her captor. These songs mark the creative abilities of the heroine as she realizes what she can offer the beast to save her own life. Anne Dalke ascertains, “This woman has discovered the force of artistic expression, the ability to keep off disaster by the power of poetry” (164). This poetry, the lyrics to the songs she chooses, encapsulates the woman’s agency as she uses it to pacify her captor and vocally portray her emotions. Schoenberg and Trudeau’s introduction to the author recognizes that, “‘Circumstance’ represents one of the earliest meditations on the power of the female artist in American literature” (161). The heroine takes agency from her authority in choosing which songs to sing. When she feels lonely, “wild, melancholy, forsaken songs” come to mind, and while she reflects on the Great Deliverance, she sings an appropriate Psalm (Spofford 209, 211). She does what she can, given her circumstances, to retain her agency and creative freedom, much like the women in early America who advocated publishing their own captivity narratives.

At their time of publication, women’s captivity narratives gave new voices to women and pushed for increased female agency. While early women captives were not always offered the chance to write their own narratives and with no doubt that editors had a large role in the shaping and telling of the story, the fact remains, for the position of women in colonial America, it is remarkable that these women could get their stories published despite gender oppression. Catherine A. Brekus says that early women’s writing, such as the early captivity narratives, “provided a compelling justification for women’s right to make their voices heard in the public sphere. Almost all of the women who published books in early

America focused on Christian themes, and they defended their decision to appear in print by emphasizing their personal experience of God's grace" (483). Religious testimony allowed these early women writers to have success, which paved the way for the future success of women writing on their own and as a career like Spofford. Even within Panther's fictional captivity narrative, the heroine has agency, and like Spofford's heroine using her voice to stay alive, Panther's heroine uses her mouth to free herself. When confronted in the cave and forcibly held captive until she agrees to have sex with her male captor, the heroine narrates, "Having the liberty of my mouth I soon made out to bite the bark in two with which he bound me, by which I found means to liberate myself while he continued sleeping" (Panther 89). This nameless heroine also sings "a mournful song" in the wilderness, which alerts the men who ultimately bring her back to society to find her (Panther 86). The power of the mouth is ultimately what saves Panther's heroine. Spofford uses a similar situation in "Circumstance" when the heroine's husband hears her singing in the forest and follows her voice to find her (212-13). Much like Spofford's heroine, these captive women use their agency to have a voice in the face of their oppressors. Spofford shows through her heroine's use of voice that women still had to rely on the mediums offered to them to have a voice in society, but demonstrates how their agency has changed in the last scene of the story. While Spofford does not reveal what the heroine's "hurried word" was to her husband upon arriving home, the woman uses her voice in this opportunity to save her family (214). Crow's introduction to Spofford and "Circumstance" claims, "The story can also be seen as representing the life of an artist whose craft is her only livelihood, and who must keep inventing and producing in order to survive" (194). This reading parallels Spofford's own career as a magazine storywriter to support her family. It also marks the struggle for women

to maintain a voice in 1860 American society. By omitting dialogue, especially in the last scene, Spofford shows that there remains a long way to go for women's agency and power of voice in the pre-Civil War era.

Christian Religion: The Power of Salvation

The Christian religion, typically a Protestant denomination, plays a large role in the captivity narrative genre and appears in Spofford's "Circumstance" as well. An important religious scene in "Circumstance" comes when the heroine thinks back to her spectral experience with the sheet and "shivered with spiritual fear" (Spofford 210). This leads her to question her own spirituality and consider "what sins she had committed, what life she had led, to find her punishment so soon and in these pangs" (Spofford 210). Spofford's protagonist views her captivity as a reprimand from God for her previous inactivity in her spiritual life; she sees no other possible reason for her captivity. This echoes the voices of other notable women captives. Rowlandson also saw her captivity as a trial from God – a punishment of sorts, but one meant to test her faith in the presence of suffering. After a particularly difficult week, and realizing it is Sunday, Rowlandson divulges, "I then remembered how careless I had been of Gods holy time: how many Sabbaths I had lost and misspent, and how evilly I had walked in Gods sight; which lay so close upon my Spirit, that it was easie for me to see how righteous it was with God to cut off the threed [thread] of my life, and cast me out of his presence for ever" (16). Rowlandson's reflections and guilt motivate her to draw closer to God in her time of captivity. At the same time, like the heroine of "Circumstance," this motivation allows Rowlandson to survive her captivity as she focuses on what she can do instead of losing all hope and resilience.

While Spofford's heroine often echoes the thoughts Rowlandson had while in captivity, Spofford provides a gradual spiritual awakening for her heroine throughout her captivity as she comes to rely on the power of God to save her more than the power of her husband. When the beast captures the woman, Spofford decidedly differentiates her heroine from many women in early captivity narratives, for "She did not think at this instant to call upon God. She called upon her husband" (207). The heroine at first does not put her faith in God to save her, but in her husband. This scene contrasts with one of Rowlandson's first reactions to the Native American attack: "The Lord hereby would make us the more to acknowledge his Hand, and to see that our Help is always in him" (13). Throughout her narrative, Rowlandson looks to God for help and comfort and does not recognize her husband as a way out of captivity until the latter portion of her narrative. As Derounian-Stodola mentions, due to so much religious influence in the writing and editing of captivity narratives, "the Indian captivity narrative became a parable of the soul's thralldom to evil and showed the role of the captivity experience in bringing the erring soul closer to God" (xiii). Spofford imitates Rowlandson's religious experiences in the spirituality of her heroine, who begins to think more like Rowlandson as her night of capture goes on.

By allowing her heroine to trust in her own intelligence as well as the man she loves, Spofford shows that relying on religious faith alone may not always solve every problem, but that it provides a hope still important in the lives of 1860s Americans. After realizing the dismal chance of survival she has since her husband "failed her," Spofford's heroine asks herself, "Was she not in God's hands? Did not the world swing at his will? If this were in his great plan of providence, was it not best, and should she not accept it?" (210). Confronting these questions allows the protagonist to justify her situation as she relinquishes personal

guilt and responsibility. Therefore, she attributes her situation to God's will instead of her own bad luck. Dalke expresses, "It has taken Spofford's protagonist all night to reach the state of utter reliance on God" (165). The heroine's faith then appears more genuine than many other captive women as it is not used as the "correct" response to her situation, but rather is recognized after she considers her fate. The woman eventually no longer fears her death because "she has ceased to fear the separation from God that would come with her death...the woman has also moved from her fear of separation from God to the assurance and acceptance of eternal life with God after death" (Holly 158). In God, she has found a sense of hope, and that hope enables her to continue singing in confidence to the beast because she knows that in either life or death, God will save her. Engaging her heroine in a religious faith that develops throughout the story, much like Rowlandson relates in her narrative, allows Spofford to show that even in a slowly secularizing America, faith still has a purpose in redemption. Despite the tensions threatening to tear the country apart, Spofford shows that regardless of the destruction the beast of war may cause, her readers can have faith in what the future holds for America.

Common Tensions: On the Brink of Civil War

The captivity narrative, a well-known genre to readers in 1860, functioned as a way to build continuity with the past as Spofford's readers harkened back to the stories of early America. Richard Vanderbeets asserts, "The narratives of Indian captivity are more than cultural indices or curiosities; they touch upon fundamental truths of experience" (562). A still-forming country, thought Spofford, could use some of this experience to guide it through its next chapter. Roy Harvey Pearce declares that the form of the captivity narrative "shapes and reshapes itself according to varying immediate cultural needs," and goes on to say that,

“what is important is what the narrative was for the readers for whom it was written” (1).

Therefore, we must consider what it meant for an audience in 1860 to read a captivity narrative. As explained by Sivils, “by the 1840s and 1850s the particulars of Indian captivity narratives were so well known that just the hint of them summoned forth a range of disturbing connotations” (92-93). Even if less intense, this familiarity would continue into the decades that followed. Bringing back the past was a clear purpose Spofford had in mind while writing “Circumstance.” It is important to consider what the American cultural landscape was when Spofford wrote “Circumstance” to appreciate how she uses the captivity narrative genre to meet the “cultural needs” of her fellow Americans.

In early America, the colonists stood united against a common enemy denying them the freedom they desired, while in 1860, less than 100 years after they eventually gained that freedom from Great Britain, they allowed differences nearly to destroy the country they had built. Spofford wants her readers to ponder the implications of this while they reflect on the past in her story. Spofford’s *Indian Devil* represents the many tensions present in the lives of Americans at the time of the story’s publication, most notably, the coming Civil War. As an image of the fear the idea of war brought to Americans, the beast threatens the safety and independence of the heroine just as the coming war would do to the country. When the heroine realizes that the beast is near to killing her, she says that this death would be “worse than any other that is to be named!” (Spofford 209). She imagines other forms of death but still concludes that her present situation is far worse, as she explains, “Let us be ended by fire, and we are ashes, for the winds to bear, the leaves to cover; let us be ended by wild beasts, and the base, cursed thing howls with us forever through the forest” (Spofford 209). Death by nature, to the heroine, provides a lasting closure and sense of freedom, but death by

another living being offers no release – an eternal suffering. Here Spofford comments on the lurid notion of a country at war with itself. Its consequences, like the life of the beast, will haunt American history.

Although Spofford sets “Circumstance” in colonial America, she alludes to the present internal conflicts in America through the events in her story. Anderson points out the significance in that the heroine becomes “pinned down rather than carried off” (349) by her captor in “Circumstance.” This is how Spofford alludes to the changes in America regarding expansion and racial tension; instead of traveling far from home to an unfamiliar wilderness, her heroine must deal with an oppressed Other in the forest right outside her home, much like 1860s Americans must confront racial tensions occurring in their own neighborhoods as the tensions of the Civil War loomed. These tensions did not only occur between those of differing race, since, as Grimwood states, “For most readers of ‘Circumstance’ in 1860, the story would have signified not the victimization of one race or gender by another but the threat to one group of white people by other white people, and not foreknowledge of bloodshed yet to happen but expression of an already oppressive anxiety...Public discourse already fully evinced a civil strife tinged with end-time portent” (469). Spofford’s readers were keenly aware that the nation was in turmoil and that a war was probable. Gaul draws clear parallels between the characters in “Circumstance” and the figures of America in 1860. She states, “Perhaps the firstborn, human child symbolizes the north, slumbering under the watchful eye of the father (i.e., president), while the dangerous and angry panther represents the rebellious south...The protagonist’s salvation lies with the human child and its father; her destruction is threatened by the panther” (Gaul 41). In this reading, Spofford urges her readers to avoid the rash and violent decisions of the South and instead remain under the

protective care of the man with the gun. However, this reading is complicated by the weakness of the husband compared to the power and authority of the Indian Devil, who allows its captive to be free. Gaul goes on to mention the further complications brought by the ending of the story, where Spofford “shows the home destroyed regardless of the outcome of the conflict. Perhaps that is Spofford’s most prescient comment on the effects of wars within and without” (41). As the country geared up for what would be the bloodiest war in America, Spofford wanted to remind her readers that there is no winner in a civil war; despite heroic or miraculous victories, devastation would still mark the American landscape.

Racial tensions between whites and Native Americans still functioned as an issue in the 1860s. Holly states that even though the threat of Native American attacks stood relatively low in pre-Civil war America, “the fear and hatred of wild, dark-skinned peoples remained intimately entwined in the ethos of a Christian nation that continued to do battle with indigenous peoples in the west” (161). As more Americans moved west, whites continued to infiltrate and claim Native American lands, meaning that captivity situations remained relevant and that women continued to publish true captivity narratives. Janet Dean discusses issues that these narratives, such as Sarah Wakefield’s, published in 1864, faced in the 1860s, saying, “the authority of the author-witness erodes in the face of a commanding, politically motivated story of racial conflict and national possession” (99). This issue, along with a rise in the popularity of fiction writing, allowed the captivity narrative to transition without difficulty to fictitious accounts, such as in “Circumstance,” while still allowing for commentary on these racial tensions.

Not only does the Indian Devil stir up images of Native Americans, but it also summons images of African American slavery in America, a clear point of tension prior to

the Civil War. In response to images of racial tensions in the story, Grimwood states, “In anti-slavery discourse during the decade before the Civil War, the Slave Power [that is, the power that slave owners held politically in the country] routinely appeared as a beast, a devil, a demon, a fiend, a dragon, a serpent, a monster, a predator assaulting a virtuous victim – all of the figures Prescott uses to describe the animal that assaults her heroine” (472). The horror of American slavery was not hidden from Americans in 1860, particularly in the North. Published in 1845, Frederick Douglass’s best-selling autobiography depicting his life as a slave would have been familiar to many of Spofford’s readers. Grimwood goes on to claim, “To a greater degree than is usually remembered, the slavery controversy involved freedom of expression” (477). Just as the beast limits the heroine’s ability to speak and call out for help, so too did slavery prevent many people from having a voice. Spofford’s story then takes on a timelier, politically charged reading when viewing the captor as a stand-in for the slavery running rampant in the South. Spofford’s layered description of her villain allows readers to understand how the story transcends time to comment on many of the tensions throughout American history.

Conclusion

An analysis of Spofford’s “Circumstance” permits a deeper understanding of Spofford’s original purposes for her readers. Her use of both the American Gothic and captivity narrative genres in the story allows her to comment on the social and cultural tensions her readers faced. Pearce notes that, “the captivity narrative is interesting and valuable to us, I submit, not because it can tell us a great deal about the Indian or even about immediate frontier attitudes towards the Indian, but rather because it enables us to see more deeply and more clearly into popular America culture, popular American issues, and popular

American tastes” (20). Spofford’s tale fits into the captivity narrative landscape in a unique way, bridging the colonial frame of reference with the pre-Civil War American mindset. The American Gothic genre allows her to use her story to comment on the national crisis at hand. “Circumstance” is a story of endurance and hope for a better American future. Logan, after looking at the various ways “Circumstance” relates to captivity narratives, concludes that by using elements of the genre in her story, Spofford looks to the past to show what should be passed on to the next generations (126). Spofford ends her story with a glimmer of hope as the narrator concludes, “For the rest, – the world was all before them, where to choose” (214). Spofford urges her readers to consider the choices they have before them in 1860, just as her protagonists must choose how to react and persevere after the destruction of their home.

CHAPTER IV

CONSTRUCTING THE CONTEMPORARY CAPTIVITY EXPERIENCE

The captivity narrative tradition, while most associated with early American literature, continues to pervade many contemporary works since “captivity functions as a master metaphor in American literature” (Griffin 322). The ability of the genre to evolve over hundreds of years while continuing to attract the attention of many readers points to its adaptability and relevance throughout history. Christopher Castiglia claims that the captivity narrative genre historically “gives symbolic form to the culturally unnameable: confinement within the home, enforced economic dependence, rape, compulsory heterosexuality, prescribed plots” (4). By examining what is written in captivity texts, as well as what is only alluded to, we can better understand the function of the genre in culture as well as for the captives portrayed. More recent narratives, such as Jaycee Dugard’s 2011 *A Stolen Life*, show how the genre has progressed and what the captivity narrative looks like today. Dugard gives a transparent look at the contemporary captivity experience, illustrating the importance of constructing the captive’s experience and identity through narrative writing in order to be truly free.

Jaycee Lee Dugard was captured in June 1991 at age eleven on her way to school in rural California. Her captors, Phillip and Nancy Garrido, used a stun gun to incapacitate Dugard on her way to the school bus stop. After spending eighteen years in captivity, living with the Garridos in a backyard assemblage of shacks and tents and with limited exposure to the world outside, Dugard and her two daughters, fathered by her captor, Phillip Garrido, were identified and redeemed back into society in 2009. Dugard published her first memoir,

A Stolen Life, in 2011, which recounts her experiences in captivity, present-day reflections, and excerpts from journals she kept while in captivity. Dugard's text, like many other true narratives of captivity within the last few decades, creates a space for her to share her story with the public who followed her story in the media. However, her text is more than a tell-all tale of scandal, but rather allows her to reflect on her experiences and piece together her memories through writing.

While Dugard's text has not yet received critical attention, captivity scholars have given texts like hers a place in the captivity narrative genre. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, Roy Harvey Pearce, and Richard Vanderbeets give the genre a wide berth in American literature, each commenting on how the genre overlaps with others and continues to find a place in contemporary literature. Christopher Castiglia devotes a chapter of *Bound and Determined* to the captivity of Patty Hearst in the 1970s, noting the similarities between traditional Indian captivity narrative and her more recent story of captivity. Edward M. Griffin also discusses Patty Heart's captivity story as part of the narrative tradition, using her story to analyze the way society has viewed captive women throughout history. Celia Jameson briefly mentions Dugard in discussing the effects of long-term captivity and assimilation. New additions to the captivity narrative genre, often labeled as memoirs, should continue to be examined in what they say about the world today, since, as Roy Harvey Pearce claims, "the captivity narrative gives us sharp insight into various segments of popular American culture" (20). In this chapter, I will use Dugard's narrative to explore how the contemporary captivity memoir gives women a place to construct and voice their experiences within the physical and mental confines of captivity as they discover what it means to be free.

Reconstructing Captivity through Writing

The issue of authorship pervades the analysis of many true captivity narratives. For early Native American captivity narratives authored by women, it is often difficult or impossible to know how much control women captives had in creating, editing, and publishing their narratives. Women captives also may have felt limited in what they could share in telling their captivity experiences. Sonia C. Apgar states that an important part of the narrative process is writing a text that “not only fits *with* the survivor’s memories and perceptions, but also fits *into* the social constructions or cultural norms available to her” (48). For early women captives, that often meant using careful rhetoric in constructing their texts. Society typically expected Puritan women to include religious undertones in their narratives, which may have underscored the true emotions of the captive. Derounian explains that throughout the evolution of the genre, “the religious, propagandist, sensational, or literary intent progressively diminished the individual experience for some other end” (92). Michelle Burnham states that captive women such as Mary Rowlandson had to combine “elements of the various narrative forms available to her” in order to share their experiences in text (72). This meant that many captive women may not have been able to share their full authentic experiences in writing.

Women had a variety of reasons for wanting to share their captivity experiences in a published narrative. Derounian-Stodola explains that women may have been influenced to write for monetary purposes, to appease family or community members, or to “set the record straight by furnishing insider information” (xviii). Whatever their reason for writing, the narrative creation process allowed captive women to reconstruct their memories of their experiences in an almost therapeutic way. Derounian-Stodola further explains that their texts

could “counter captivity’s disunifying and disordering effects by unifying and ordering the experience in print” (xvii). In creating a storied version of their experience, captives might better be able to move on from their experiences, setting them to rest in the text. Sarah Wakefield wrote her narrative to tell the true version of her captivity experience and ends her text in a near sigh of relief as she states, “And now I will bid this subject farewell forever” (313). Reflection plays a large role in the captivity narrative writing process. Knowing how their situation will turn out, captives can look back on the events of their captivity with clarity and can make connections between the events of their past and the reality of their present. Mary Rowlandson, in reflecting on her captivity experiences throughout her narrative, attributes all things to God and sees ways in which God intervened on her behalf. Burnham describes this process as bringing up the “memory of her experience” that “like an improperly sealed wound is reopened by the activity of remembrance and writing” (67). Instead of repressing memories, captives can rewrite them as free women, granting themselves a voice in the process. Castiglia states, “in the experience of captivity, seemingly the most helpless and effacing of conditions, these women gain an agency they would have found nearly impossible to claim in their native culture” (14). Whether their narratives went on to become best-sellers or only circulated more narrowly, the narrative writing process could serve many purposes in woman’s life after captivity.

More recent captivity memoirs are more transparent in their authorship and allow for greater adaptability by the captive. Some texts have multiple authors listed on the cover, such as Elizabeth Smart’s *My Story*, authored by herself and Chris Stewart. Others choose to tell their story to an author, such as Rick Bragg’s *I Am a Soldier, Too: The Jessica Lynch Story*. Whatever their reason for allowing others into the writing of their narratives, captive women

today have much more of a choice when it comes to the telling of their story. They also have more control over what they include in their stories. Captives today are not as guarded in discussing taboo topics and their conflicted feelings during captivity. The idea of “unifying and ordering” captivity experiences through writing is still true in many cases, with women like Dugard stating her decision to write as, “my attempt to convey the overwhelming confusion I felt during those years and to begin to unravel the damage that was done to me and my family” (vii). Unearthing the memories and experiences during captivity allows women to come to terms with all that they survived, allowing them to learn from and move past their captivity.

Dugard, an aspiring writer even as a child, chose to write her own narrative in her own words. She begins her narrative with a disclaimer, stating her reasons for writing her text in her own way. In her “Author’s Note,” Dugard admits, “This book might be confusing to some” and that “I have come to realize that my perspective is unique to abduction. I don’t want to lose that voice, and therefore I have written this book how it came to me naturally” (vii). Following the pattern of many traditional captivity narratives, she uses this introductory space to communicate to her readers what they can and cannot expect in her text. She also states that she hopes her story can help others dealing with dark moments in life, “to convey that you can endure tough situations and survive” (Dugard x). Survival is certainly Dugard’s primary focus during her years in captivity. Throughout her story, she continues to reflect in disbelief at her ability to persevere and not lose hope, which becomes a message for her readers. Dugard comments on her writing process throughout her text, at one point admitting, “When I was first found I was adamant that there would be no book, no one would ever know what happened” (49). Although she clearly changed her mind, she admits, “This has

turned out to be a very hard book to write” when recounting the early parts of her captivity, explaining, “this is something I have worked hard to put behind me and to write about it in such detail years later is difficult” (Dugard 42). Through her open communication with her readers, Dugard makes clear that her narrative is in her own hands. Apgar states that maintaining a sense of “continuity” through writing is essential to recovery from trauma since “writing offers a sense of control through psychological distancing and therefore gives a survivor a sense of safety” and, “narration adheres to this culture’s sociolinguistic requirement of temporal sequencing, thereby pushing a survivor to ‘fill in the gaps’” (49). Reconstructing captivity therefore often becomes a cathartic experience for the captive.

A Stolen Life reconstructs Dugard’s captivity experience in a chronological order with moments of reflection by the author. She begins by describing the details of the day of her capture, speaking in first-person as if she is reliving the scenes moment by moment. Chapters, with Dugard as the protagonist, are interspersed with “Reflection” pieces, which Dugard writes as a narrator, looking back on her experiences. These sections reveal more of Dugard’s process in recovering her memories as she transitions from speaking as a young girl amid confusion to speaking as a woman on the other side of captivity. Notable here is the amount of detail Dugard uses when describing the first years of her captivity. She is able to reconstruct each aspect of her early days in captivity as she writes nearly twenty years later. In commenting on Rowlandson’s similar recall of her captivity specifics, Derounian explains how many captives experiencing “survivor syndrome,” or the effects following the survival of captivity or other near-death experience, also experience “hypermnnesia” which allows them to remember with such clarity and detail. She explains, “Patients with hypermnnesia do not necessarily recall their entire experience so vividly; often they select particularly

traumatic incidents” (Derounian 89). This would explain why the first year of Dugard’s captivity, where the confusion, confinement, and sexual abuse were most prevalent, seems so effortlessly recalled in vivid description. As she grows up and becomes a mother, the details of her captivity are less complete, often skipping months and years ahead in her experiences. It is as if life in captivity after motherhood becomes more normal and less traumatic for Dugard, who even wonders, “if I was ever given the choice, would I stay here or leave?” (181).

Dugard includes two journal portions in her narrative as well, giving an insight to her mental state during her captivity. The first is a journal she wrote in her second year of captivity, detailing the life of her pet cat, Eclipse. While the journal is not as much about her experiences as it is about her pet, Dugard reveals her loneliness in her reliance on Eclipse as her only companion and the only thing that shows her love in the dark confusion of her early years of captivity. The second journal portion contains entries from the last eleven years of her captivity written in secret on her captor’s computer. This journal is much more revealing in depicting Dugard’s thoughts and emotions during her captivity as the entries, “show how much I wanted my freedom, how much I wanted to see my mom, and bring light to my conflicted feelings for Phillip and Nancy Garrido” (166). Among the entries, she oscillates between a desire to run away and talking herself into staying. In an entry from 2003 she writes, “I can’t stop myself from imagining me just taking the girls and getting in the car, starting it, and leaving this horrible place forever. I know I can’t leave. I tell myself that every day. But I want to be away from here so bad it consumes me... These thoughts and feelings need to be squashed. Things will get better” (Dugard 174). Here, like many places in her narrative, Dugard convinces herself to try to make the best of the situation, stifling her

desires to leave her life of captivity. Lynn Z. Bloom comments on the effect a future audience can have on diary writing, stating “it is the audience hovering at the edge of the page that for the sophisticated diarist facilitates the work’s ultimate focus, providing the impetus either for the initial writing or for transforming what might have been casual, fragmented jottings into a more carefully crafted, contextually coherent work” (23). While Dugard wrote her second journal to record her personal thoughts in a private place, its wording and structure hints at her hopes that others would someday read it to understand her mental state while in captivity. Dugard’s choice to include a mix of written mediums in her narrative allows her to show a more complete version of herself both during and after captivity.

Dugard’s text allows her to recreate an identity she feels was stolen on the day of her capture. Instead of repressing her experiences, she brings them to light to consider how they have shaped the woman she is today. She is able to put words to her years of confusion, sorting out the real events from the thoughts her captors led her to believe. The length of her captivity meant that Dugard began establishing her identity as a captive as she matured into a woman in confinement. Captivity strips her of the most essential part of her identity – her name. After writing her name on her first journal in 1993, Phillip convinces her to renounce her name and Dugard reflects, “I tore out the corners with my name and never wrote my real name on anything again until 2009” (79). Later, when Phillip suggests she should pick a new name for her daughters to call her, she chooses Allissa. This moment of renaming allows Dugard to leave Jaycee in the past as she commits to staying in character as Allissa to survive captivity, a change that soon becomes part of her identity. She explains in her journal, “I guess I have turned a switch off inside of me. In the beginning I did it to survive. Now it’s

just a habit, I suppose, but nonetheless it is now a part of who I am” (179). Becoming a mother at fourteen and again at seventeen forces Dugard to assume a new role. No longer a mere victim, Dugard claims a new identity as a mother and has a change of perspective. Instead of feeling helpless and useless, she now has her children who depend on her and she recognizes, “I don’t think I could survive by myself outside of these walls. I wouldn’t know how to take care of myself or the kids” (174). With the care of her daughters as her priority, Dugard’s home life seems much further away. When she begins to miss her family, she considers, “I guess in a way I never really knew them” (178) as she tries to rid herself of the memory of her previous identity.

After she is rescued, Dugard has difficulty reclaiming her name and identity as a free woman. She insists she is unable to say her name aloud, but agrees to write it down, after which, she explains, “It was like breaking an evil spell. In that moment, I felt free but also exhausted and completely alive all at the same time” (209). Relinquishing the identity of Allissa allows Dugard to again become Jaycee and become free of her captors. Apgar, in discussing the genre of sexual abuse narratives, argues, “while each personal narrative is a product of a survivor’s recovery process, the construction of these narratives is also an important part of the process itself, providing each writer with a safe space in which to both come to terms with her experience and to (re)establish her sense of ‘self’” (47). In writing her narrative, Dugard not only formally constructs her captivity experiences but also constructs the facets of her identity born out of those experiences.

Captors and Motives

Traditional captivity narratives have traditional captors – the stereotypical Other – dark, evil, inhuman, and mysterious, living on the edges of the frontier. Indian captors are

often given vivid and undesirable descriptions in women's narratives. The forced confinement of women captives with the Indians and their demonizing descriptions of their captors supported the desire of many white Americans to exterminate or confine the Native people. Derounian-Stodola explains the many motives behind traditional captivity experiences, explaining that some Indian tribes took captives as a form of revenge, others as a means of trading with other Indians, still others with the intent of adopting them into their tribe, but that "a major reason Native Americans systematically seized captives was for bounty or ransom. Guilty and distraught relatives, as well as self-righteous and Indian-hating communities for whom captivity signified civilization threatened by barbarity, willingly paid for captives to be returned" (xvi-xvii). Captivity could be very profitable for Native American tribes who were losing their land and resources to the ever-encroaching white population. As Derounian-Stodola goes on to explain, this is why "some hostages were targeted for capture and why they were well treated: they were worth much more alive than dead" (xvii). Many Indian captivity narratives, such as Mary Rowlandson's and Elizabeth Hanson's, end with their families redeeming them by paying a hefty ransom payment, essentially putting a price on the lives of these women.

While many captives did endure hardship while in captivity, having little to eat and with limited shelter and comfort, captives who survived their captivity were not often physically harmed, at least not in the way the public most often expected. For a white woman captured by the Indians, rape was often assumed upon her return, her purity destroyed by her captor. Janet Dean argues, "Rape on the frontier is insidious and ubiquitous, its victims faceless white women everywhere" (106). However, this was often the claim of many white men, not the women in question, and likely was purported to further demonize the Native

American people. Derounian-Stodola claims, “The narrative record shows two dominant and differing responses: overt or covert appeals to white women’s vulnerability and Indian men’s alleged sexual prowess (often made by male writers or editors) and decisive claims that rape was virtually nonexistent in Native American culture (often made by women writers or captives)” (xvi). While it was a topic on everyone’s mind, the social taboos of the culture meant that women were not often asked directly if their captors had raped them and therefore did not always have the chance to give straightforward answers. When Wakefield returns from captivity, soldiers ask if she has “anything of a more private nature to relate” concerning her captivity (301). She also relates that of all the captive women she had spoken to, she knew of only two who were “abused by the Indians” (304). Dean states, “The inexpressibility of rape makes it a convenient figure for a dominant discourse...but actually uses sensationalism to promote a distinct political agenda” (96-97). Many women captives address the question of rape within their narratives, due to the likely assumptions of their readers, but always shrouded in careful rhetoric. Whether to protect their own public image or at the insistence of their editors, women are often quick to point out that their captors did not abuse them in a sexual manner, and while it might not always be possible to know how truthful these claims were, Derounian-Stodola explains, “the historical record indicates that rape was rare” (xvi). While rape ultimately might have occurred in some captivities, it certainly was not what motivated Indian captors.

Many of the more recent captivity narratives still include the adult male captor and younger female captive, but the captors are much less identifiable. There is no longer a clear racial component to the identity of the captor – he could be any adult male a captive might encounter. There is also less physical separation of the captor. He is not bound to the

wilderness frontier but lives and often even participates in mainstream society. Typically, others have little reason to assume a captor might be holding someone in confinement, other than perhaps a criminal record. This allows present-day captors to often remain invisible, undetected in the act of captivity. The captor continues to have various motives, but they are typically selfish or sexual in nature instead of ransom-based. The underlying threat of sexual violation in captivity, so prevalent in early narratives and so universally assumed by others, is unfortunately more often true today. What remains similar to Indian captivity narratives is the captor's quest for power over a captive.

Dugard's primary captor, Phillip Garrido, was an inconspicuous middle-aged white male. In her first description of him, Dugard claims, "He does not look like a bad guy. He looks like a normal guy. Like any ordinary guy you would see in everyday life" (14). Phillip Garrido was a convicted sex offender who spent several years in prison before kidnapping Dugard. Although he had recurrent visits from a parole officer during Dugard's captivity, Garrido must have appeared as a "normal guy" to others as well, as officers never investigated the hidden backyard where he hid Dugard. Through Dugard's experiences, it is clear that Phillip suffered from mental illness. Phillip claimed that angels were watching him, controlling his mind and his actions, and even convincing him to take Dugard. He also claims to have taken Dugard to help him with his "sexual problems." The first time Phillip rapes Dugard occurs about a week into her captivity and soon became a common occurrence. She explains, "I don't remember if he came in every day to have sex with me; all I know is it happened more times than I can count" (33). Phillip explains that by having sex with him, Dugard is helping him because, "instead of him hurting other people with his 'problem,' he took me and brought me here so I could help him and he wouldn't have to hurt anyone else

ever again” (40). For Phillip, taking Dugard as a captive was for personal gains, not monetary ones.

Power Dynamics: Control of Captor

Issues of power and control are at the center of the captivity narrative. Derounian-Stodola states, “when pared down to its essence, the genre is all about power and powerlessness” (xii). Griffin adds to this claim, “Because it involves such a stark exercise of absolute power, the captor/captive relationship may be the most terrifying of human situations” (312-313). Captors remove captives from their home life through physical force. Typically, the threat of physical violence pervades the entire captivity experience. Captive women long to be free and return home but are unable due to a physical confinement. It is when the physical confinement ends that the time in captivity typically ends as well, even for captives who choose to stay or remain involved with their captors. However, not all women captives react to their captivity in the same way. Derounian-Stodola claims, “Throughout the captivity literature, women are generally depicted as either helpless victims or provoked avengers” (xvi). A captive’s attitude and choices largely determine how her captivity progresses.

Women in long-term captivity often begin to show signs of assimilation and identification with their captors. Known as the “Stockholm syndrome” in many cases today, captives often display compassion and empathy for their captors. In Indian captivity narratives, this “immersion into an alien culture” (Vanderbeets 554) was not always a negative prospect. Assimilation allowed women to connect with their captors and gain their favor. Many women began to abandon their racist ideologies and view the Native Americans as fellow humans, perhaps even friends. Castiglia comments on the companionships that

develop in several texts where “white women assert their right to assimilate their captors, especially their female captors, into ‘communities’ (often ‘sisterhoods’) that the captors themselves do not define and from which they apparently benefit not at all” (6). Some women, such as Mary Jemison, found that the Indian lifestyle offered them more freedom than they would find in returning to white culture, and so decided to stay. Others learned that by making connections with their captors, whether genuine or not, they could have a more comfortable life in captivity. Mary Rowlandson quickly learns that she can offer her sewing skills to her captors to gain their favor and meet her needs. Burnham points out that this not only increases “her interaction with the Indians, but it gives her a defined position within their economy” (66), giving her value in their community.

The Stockholm syndrome, a term founded in 1973, is now seen as a primarily negative aspect due to its popularity in the media, described as an ability to overshadow reason in a captive’s decisions. Chris Cantor and John Price define it as a combination of four factors: threat due to an abuser, “small kindnesses from the abuser to the victim,” an isolation with the abuser, and confinement (379). Jameson, however, defines the Stockholm syndrome as twofold: an “unconscious identification,” but also “a conscious coping strategy which can be understood as a form of adaptive behaviour, providing hope for the victim in an otherwise hopeless situation” (337). She goes on to explain, “The extreme fear elicited in the hostage gives rise to the development of what *appears to be* love for and attachment to the hostage-taker, and a sympathy for the hostage-taker’s cause” (Jameson 338, my emphasis). Viewing the Stockholm syndrome as a survival mechanism rather than a complete mind control gives contemporary captives agency as they do what they need in order to survive,

similar to earlier captive women. However, assimilation with captors sometimes influences captives to remain in terrible situations and miss opportunities for escape.

Dugard's captivity begins with physical confinement and the threat of physical violence. Right after her captors drag her into their car she thinks, "I want to tell him I want to go home. But I am so scared I am afraid to make the man angry" (Dugard 11). Dugard also realizes that she needs her captors, in a sense, to survive her first years in confinement. She reflects, "I became totally dependent on him for everything...I craved human contact so much by then that I actually looked forward to him coming to see me; it felt like he was bestowing a gift to me...his presence" (Dugard 26). The Garridos imprison Dugard in their backyard buildings, forcing her to spend her first weeks locked and handcuffed in a room. Phillip slowly allows her to have more movement, removing the handcuffs and moving her back and forth between the two primary buildings, but only on his command. Dugard quickly realizes that her best chance at finding physical comfort in captivity is to try to appease Phillip and appear happy, but in doing so also confuses her true emotions. She reflects, "In a way he made me feel special. I felt needed" (55). After years of only interacting with Phillip and Nancy who control her every move, Dugard begins to accept her life in captivity.

As her years in captivity progress, Dugard's captors no longer control her physically but find a way to control her mentally. After the birth of her first child, she admits, "I do not ask to go home anymore. Too painful to even think about" (114). In her sixth year of captivity, she states, "I feel I am bound to these people – my captors – by invisible bonds instead of constant handcuffs" (130). Even when her captors trust Dugard to use their computer in private, she does not use the internet to her advantage, explaining, "I did think about using the internet to find my mom, but Phillip told me and convinced me that he was

monitoring everything I did on the internet and he would find out each and every thing I did on it” (139). The Garridos recognize the two main things Dugard misses about her life prior to captivity – freedom and family – and they manipulate her by providing her with the illusion of both. No longer confined to the two backyard buildings, Dugard can spend time outside in a fenced-in area and travel freely between the assorted buildings and tents in the backyard. Eventually, once the Garridos are sure she is under their control, she is even able to leave the backyard and go out in public, taking trips to the beach and going out shopping with Nancy. Her captors have made her so afraid of the outside world and have made her think she cannot accomplish anything on her own to the point that Dugard is afraid rather than hopeful that someone will recognize her when she is out in public as, “By then I had resigned myself to my fate” (157).

After Dugard has her first child, her relationship with her captors begins to develop into a familial one. Phillip’s sexual abuse of Dugard is less frequent as he begins to orchestrate his next fantasy – creating a normal family. When Phillip builds an enclosed outdoor area for Dugard, she explains, “Phillip and Nancy say that we can have barbecues out here and be a real family. I am really looking forward to having a family and doing things again” (122). Dugard’s daughters begin calling Nancy “mom,” Phillip “dad,” and know Dugard as their older sister, Allissa. Phillip and Nancy live with them in the backyard and take them on outings, appearing to the world as if they are a typical family. Not wanting to cause problems and threaten the safety of her children, Dugard goes along with the façade and soon life in the Garrido family becomes her new normal. Phillip had convinced Dugard that the outside world was a dark and unstable place, a place she would not survive in. Dugard claims, “One of the reasons I stayed was I wanted my kids to be safe. The outside

world was scary for me. I was so afraid that if I left or tried to leave and take them both with me, I wouldn't be able to protect them. I know they were so safe in the backyard; I didn't have to worry about anyone taking them like I was taken" (143). Dugard's years in captivity have diminished her self-confidence to a point where she feels unable to live a life free of her captors, and so she stays.

The Path to Redemption

Captivity ends when the captive is redeemed, released, escapes, or is offered these options but chooses to stay. Since the motive behind many captivities was ransom, women often had to wait in captivity until their family or community paid their way out. Some women, such as Mary Rowlandson, are even involved in the ransom process. Rowlandson's captors ask her what price her husband would pay for her redemption, essentially asking her to put a price on her own head. She carefully considers the matter, reasoning, "I thought that if I should speak of but a little, it would be slighted, and hinder the matter; if of a great Sum, I knew not where it would be procured" (58). Through this process, Rowlandson plays a large role in her own redemption, relying only on others to provide the means that she has deemed will set her free. Hannah Dustan also takes her redemption into her own hands. She is freed after she and her fellow captives take up hatchets in the middle of the night and "struck such home Blows upon the Heads of their *Sleeping Oppressors*, that e'er they could any of them struggle into any effectual resistance...*there they fell down Dead*" (Mather 60). Other women, such as Sarah Wakefield, remain in captivity until their people come to release them. Whatever their means of escape, many women eagerly await their freedom and do whatever they feel they can to end their captivity.

Dugard imagines her release from the beginning of her confinement, unaware of the eighteen years that would transpire before her eventual release. She takes careful note of her surroundings, telling herself, “I must remember that there is a train nearby so that when I am found I can tell whoever finds me that I was being held somewhere I can hear a train” (20). In the early days of her captivity, Dugard shows that she is familiar with stories of kidnapping and hostage and, as Nan Goodman writes, that “captivity fosters exchange” (1) when she appeals to Phillip, “My family doesn’t have a lot of money, but they would pay a ransom to get me back” (20). Unable to appease Phillip with her offer, Dugard loses hope in those coming to find her. Perhaps because she was taken as a child, Dugard becomes a very passive captive, preferring to go along with her captors’ plans instead of resisting them or putting up a fight. As Griffin explains, “our cultural tradition teaches us to celebrate the escapee and accuse the unescaped captive of weakness, cowardice, or, worse, collusion” (321). Dugard understands that the world might see this docile behavior as weak when they hear her story, but feels as if she has no other choice in her given situation. As the years go by, she stops asking to go home and never tries to run away even after she is allowed to leave the backyard.

Dugard’s narrative contains several passages where she addresses the ways the length of time she spent in captivity could have been avoided. In remembering Phillip’s visiting parole officers, Dugard reflects, “I can’t understand why Phillip’s parole officers didn’t know anything about the property and the size of it. It makes me believe no one cared or was even really looking for me” (58). From the many parole officers to Phillip’s therapists and doctors, Dugard is astounded that no one questioned the effects of his mental state and his time spent in his backyard. As she has more and more public outings, she relates, “I could never shake

the feeling that one day someone would say, ‘Hey, aren’t you that missing girl?’ but nobody ever did. I was nobody. Nobody saw me” (Dugard 158). After her release, she also claims, “it is hard for me to trust in law enforcement...the government failed me for eighteen years. And that will take time to heal from” (Dugard 133). She later adds that she brings these issues up “not to point fingers, but to bring up the sometimes uncomfortable topic of laziness and responsibility (Dugard 271-272). Further, Dugard does attribute her redemption to two curious police officers who “saw something amiss and spoke up about it” (x) when she and her daughters accompanied Phillip to a meeting with his parole officer. Her honesty in speaking about the issues of redemption is reminiscent of Wakefield, who criticizes those coming for her rescue in their slow arrival throughout her text. Both women are transparent in how they feel about the efforts behind their redemption.

Transformation during captivity often makes reentry into mainstream culture difficult for captives. Goodman associates this with a captive returning in “a state of transculturation in which aspects of two or more cultures have been internalized and are at odds” (5). Return could be a highly emotional time since many women returned to their families after they were presumed dead and “were received on their return by relatives and friends in the sense of having come from the grave, reborn to the world from which they had passed by means of symbolic death” (Vanderbeets 561). Experiences in captivity also often leave women questioning their own values after having seen their own culture at a distance. Goodman claims that captives like Rowlandson might struggle with this experience since, “having at one time viewed her culture differently, she may – at some unspecified time in the future – do so again” (5). Castiglia further explains the difficulties many women faced by explaining, “Rather than calling return to white society ‘freedom,’ captives repeatedly expand the

parameters of their texts to show their continuing imprisonment, even after their return from captivity, within the subordinating, infantilizing, and immobilizing gender ideologies of white America” (10). Having experienced the unimaginable, captives often struggle to assimilate back into the lives they left behind in a society that is often quick to label them as passive victims. This prolongs the captivity experience and adds to the difficulties captive women must face as they return to their old lives.

When Mary Rowlandson returned from captivity, it was not to the home and family she left behind. After losing her home to destruction from the Indians and losing a child during her captivity, Rowlandson comments on the extreme circumstances she has endured in that, “one hour I have been in health, and wealth, wanting nothing: but the next hour in sickness, and wounds, and death, having nothing but sorrow and affliction” (50). She admits to experiencing insomnia upon her return, lying awake each night with her thoughts “upon things past, upon the awful dispensations of the Lord towards us: upon his wonderful power and might in carrying us through so many difficulties, in returning us in safety, and suffering none to hurt us” (Rowlandson 50). Sarah Wakefield struggles with feelings of guilt after her captivity as she considers the fate of the Indian people, especially of her protector, Chaska. Having been widely accused of being an “Indian lover” due to her relationship with Chaska, the years following her captivity are filled with her attempts to tell her true experiences as she testifies in court and eventually chooses to write her text because “I have been grievously abused by many, who are ignorant of the particulars of my captivity and release by the Indians” (Wakefield 241). Women like Mary Jemison, who chose not to return to white culture for a variety of reasons, also considered the difficulties they would face if they wanted to return. When offered the chance to return to her family, Jemison ultimately

chooses to stay, in part because, “I had got a large family of Indian children, that I must take with me; and that if I should be so fortunate as to find my relatives, they would despise them, if not myself; and treat us as enemies; or, at least with a degree of cold indifference, which I thought I could not endure” (Seaver 178). Having at times experienced near death, women captives often felt separated by their experiences upon their return to their families as they returned with a different outlook on their own life and culture.

Like many captives, Dugard struggles to return to the life she was taken from. With the increased availability of news and media, captives today are often known all over the country. Their pictures are broadcast, their lives and families are dissected, and those who follow their story eagerly await the captive’s return. Upon her release, Dugard had to face a barrage of press desperate for details of her captivity and life in the aftermath. She explains that the media coverage continues to affect her decisions since she must always ask, “Am I doing something today with my kids to cause them to get their photo taken and jeopardize their privacy?” (229). In an attempt to create a normal life for herself and her children, she admits, “Sometimes I feel like I’m still a prisoner” (229). Dugard’s protection of her children is central to many of her concerns after captivity. Like Jemison, Dugard worries that her children will not be accepted when she returns to her family. She explains that the first thing she told her mother after her recovery was that she had had children, in an “attempt to see if she would accept them with me. I knew I would never leave my kids and if my mom rejected them for some reason, I didn’t know what I would do” (Dugard 211). Even with the acceptance from her family, Dugard struggles as an adult to find a place in the world she left as a child, but her text shows that her outlook on the future is positive as she claims she will no longer “be afraid to live” (269).

Conclusion

The contemporary captivity narrative has evolved to meet the needs of the captives, authors, and readers of today. While still encompassing many of the traditional elements of a captivity text, narratives today are less guarded in displaying the true experience of the captive, in all its disordered, muddled pieces. They show that recovering from captivity is a process of reconstruction, both of memory and identity. Dugard's narrative shows the psychological benefits to the writing process, which allows us to understand the need for so many women to narrate their experiences after the trauma of captivity. Dugard, like the captive women before her, sets her experience to rest in her text, finding that freedom from captivity, in whatever capacity possible, comes after self-expression is fulfilled. Control and power, two fundamental elements of a captivity experience, will always be desired by humankind, meaning that the captivity narrative tradition will continue to prevail in literature, further giving a voice to the otherwise voiceless.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The adaptability of the captivity narrative allows it to work for the women it involves, authorizing them to find a place for expression and acceptance in writing. The captivity narratives of Mary Jemison and Sarah Wakefield, Harriet Prescott Spofford's fictional short story "Circumstance," and the captivity memoir of Jaycee Dugard display the various forms of the genre while demonstrating its ability to connect women across centuries in a shared experience of captivity. Mary Jemison shows that the transformation that comes with captivity can mean a new life and identity apart from white culture, one that comes with more agency and freedom, as she establishes relationships with the Seneca people. Similarly, Sarah Wakefield's captivity transformation, while not as complete, allows her to view white culture critically and give a voice to the Native people of her captivity. Jemison and Wakefield rely on the genre to tell their stories of change during captivity despite their experiences resisting many of the traditional elements of the captivity narrative.

The texts of Spofford and Dugard, while not formally labeled as women's captivity narratives, offer useful additions to the consideration of the genre's adaptability in the broader scope of women's literature. Spofford demonstrates the captivity narrative's transition to the Gothic short story, giving her readers a familiar story within the fantastical depiction of her heroine's night in the wilderness. She uses elements of the genre to speak to the cultural and political situation of her readers, urging them to consider the destructive forces that follow a captivity experience or cultural divide. Dugard relies on the captivity narrative to share her experience not only for those desiring to know the details of her

traumatic years in captivity, but also for her own purpose of reconstructing memory and identity. Analysis of her narrative provides a picture of how the captivity narrative will continue to remain relevant for women in American literature.

The captivity narrative genre has and will continue to evolve as it transforms to new cultural situations, giving women a space to claim their experiences as they tell their story. Roy Harvey Pearce claims, “Certainly, so long as the narrative continues to be produced, the experience which it records is at core vital” and that, “an experience and a narrative...can be vital for many different reasons” (20). The reasons for the captivity narrative’s importance change as the stories of captors and captives change; however, they continue to provide a place for women to possess agency rather than victimization. The vitality of the captivity narrative is in what it provides for the captives and their readers. Self-expression is something everyone longs for in relating their experiences, thoughts, and emotions to others. For many women, the captivity narrative provides the ultimate vehicle for self-expression, giving them a literary space, in whatever capacity, to tell their story. Allowing the genre to adapt while remaining part of a larger literary tradition offers its participants a sense of community, of belonging to a larger form of female expression.

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