ENGL 4384: Senior Seminar
Student Anthology

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Dr. Rebecca Harrison, Professor
Department of English & Philosophy

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Captivity (Un)Bound: Gender, Border-Crossing, and Narrative Dissent

Introduction........................................By Dr. Rebecca Harrison 5

(Re)Adapting an Unstable Genre
Manipulation of Female identity in the Hannah Dustin Narratives of Cotton Mather and Nathaniel Hawthorne .................................................................By LaKeisha Davis 11

Identifying Outside the Puritan Realm: Using Louise Erdrich’s “Captivity” to Underline Mary Rowlandson’s Found Agency in Rowlandson’s Narrative.................................By Sara Pate 23

Female Agency in Caroline Gordon’s “The Captive” ..........................................................By Jennifer Bolden 37

Captivity in Other Contexts
The Economic Performance of Acculturation in Arthur Golden’s Memoirs of a Geisha and the Captivity Narrative of Mary Jemison.........................................................By Julia Powell 53

My Heart is Good, But I Am a Monster: The Binary of the Beast and Avenant in Jean Cocteau’s La Belle et La Bête .................................................................By Patrick Attaway 67

Captivity as Usable Past
Are the Odds Ever in Her Favor?: The Lateral Captivity of Katniss Everdeen.................................By Olivia McGregor 85
History as Usable Past: Gender and Captivity in Eudora Welty’s *The Robber Bridegroom* .....................By Margie Weiss

Impenetrable Darkness: Scott’s Elucidation of the Female Philosopher through *Escapade* and Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” ..............................................................By Jody Cook

About the Contributors

Captivity stories may have sustained their interest for . . . women readers through the connections they offer between the plight of the literal captive and less tangible forms of victimization and restriction experienced by their . . . female readers. Captivity thus gives symbolic form to the culturally unnameable: confinement within the home, enforced economic dependence, rape, compulsory heterosexuality, prescribed plots.

—Christopher Castiglia from *Bound and Determined*

The stories and subsequent representations of two prominent female captives—Hannah Dustan and Olive Oatman—occupy seemingly opposite ends on the spectrum of the captivity narrative and its cultural and political power. Like the stories of other captive women, Dustan and Oatman’s captivity narratives gained the status of national myths. They became a “usable” past for authors seeking to cement or undo various cultural and political agendas. Dustan’s uncanny ability to kill her Abenaki captors in a violent manner and escape with their scalps to collect the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s bounty symbolically elevated American women’s ability to defy encroachments and violations by the racial and cultural “Other” and defend white, Christian values by any means necessary. Oatman, on the other hand, received an indelible mark of her captivity through the highly visible tattoos inscribed on her chin by her Mohave captors. Her captivity, thus, represented the threat of transformation into—rather than resistance to—the “savage” Other and called for greater protection and vigilance against cultures and races on the margins of white, Anglo-American society.

Yet the eager and anxious attempts of male editors, authors, journalists, and ministers to frame and control both women’s experiences and stories of their captivities underscore the subversive potential both held within their home culture. Racially and culturally, Dustan’s own descent into savagery suggested a dangerous and potentially essential closeness or even resemblance between white settlers living on the frontier and their Native American neighbors. Oatman’s tattoos and rumors of a marriage to and children with one of her Indian captors called into question the
presumably ontological difference between “savage” and “civilized.” Her haunting post-captivity visage suggested that cultural and racial identity were only skin-deep, while the released captive’s subjectivity (as well as the account of her trials) was something more interior, more elusive, more troubling. Perhaps so many captivity accounts emphasized release as “redemption,” because the captors’ marks stamped upon the captives were evidence of a latent, pre-existing savagery that had to be, once more, buried under layers of clothing and civilization.

Dustan and Oatman’s transformations through captivity certainly disturbed and even undermined prevailing gender scripts throughout American history. Both as victims and victors, captive women and their accounts brought into high relief the restrictive gender orders captivity experiences dislodged, often granting them opportunities for transgressive agency in their dealings with and survival among Native Americans. Dustan’s bloody destruction of her captors clearly usurped white men’s monopolistic claim to violence, but even the proper dress Oatman donned in a widely circulated post-captivity photograph could not contain her Indian marks that hinted at a language, a potential, and even a hidden reservoir of impulses that eluded white, male interpretation and control. These narratives, thus, became early bestsellers because they held their audiences’ attention—through a forceful mix of suspense, exoticism, danger, and even sexual titillation certainly—but also because of the ambiguous threads concerning the borders of womanhood they reveal.

For the students in this senior seminar class, Castiglia’s well-articulated point that opens this collection—that captivity narratives have sustained their popularity because they “give symbolic form to the culturally unnameable” to “less tangible forms of victimization and restriction”—lies at the heart of their collective body of work (4). The malleable and contested tropes, sites, and discourses of captivity—literal and literary—came to the fore for them in Pierre Carrier-Belleuse’s painting Jeune Femme Ajustant Son Corset (1893). Though not literally taking up Indian captivity as its subject, Carrier-Belleuse’s classic painting lays bare the female body as a site of cultural discipline. The corset and the practice of tightlacing center both our gaze and the woman in the image who, in donning the restrictive corset, conforms to aesthetic dictates that impose culturally defined constructs of beauty onto her body, which will literally change its corporeal form with prolonged use. The image for them plays with ambiguity, much like many of the captivity narratives they studied, simultaneously upholding oppressive molds of womanhood in
her capitulation to the garment while also resonating with her subversion to it. Is she putting the corset on or removing it? Does her active engagement with it, as opposed to being the passive recipient of the tying, serve to highlight her function as a patriarchal agent? Or is it the opposite, that we are seeing her remove something put upon her? Why are we shown her face only as a reflection during the act? Does it suggest that the individual woman is marginalized by this patriarchal aesthetic? Or, rather, does it locate the ways in which she, too, is culpable for the restrictions placed upon her? This ambiguity for these students laid the proverbial finger on the pulse of Castiglia’s argument concerning why women’s Indian captivity narratives elicited such multivalent responses from a variety of readers: the ability of this genre to both uphold and undo dominant cultural models, from the idea of a white, patriarchal nation to visions of gentle and demure womanhood/motherhood.

Throughout the semester, our course examined these tenets (and the many paradoxes) of the American female captivity narrative—a highly politicized genre that frequently tried to cement propagandistic, theological, and racist agendas, and thus permeated the American cultural imaginary from the colonial era to the present day. Beginning with the foundational texts of early American contact with the cultural Other, texts dominated by the experiences of women as captives, writers, and readers, our course closely analyzed the characteristics, historical roots, and nationalist impulses of this distinct genre and its employment of the female body, along with its evolution in the American literary and cultural landscape. Our primary readings ranged from Mary Rowlandson’s foundational narrative and some direct, modern responses (Louise Erdrich’s “Captivity” and Sherman Alexie’s “Captivity), to Dustan’s climactic exploits and various male attempts (Mather, Hawthorne, Whitman, Thoreau) to adumbrate its subversive potential, to early national and antebellum accounts that blended the factual with the fictive, to modern adaptations in literature and film that place captivity tropes on a wider, cultural platform (such as the captivity of the female artist in Jane Campion’s The Piano). In literary criticism, we studied the seminal work by Christopher Castiglia (Bound and Determined) and Michelle Burnham (Captivity and Sentiment) throughout the semester, applying key concepts to primary literature and examining more recent critical responses and paradigms. The eight essays that make up this collection represent the fullness of this investigation.

Finally, in addition to their own projects, all seminar students engaged in close collaboration as an editorial board. They reviewed and eventually
edited all anthology contributions, debated title and section grouping selections, and even determined parameters for the contributor pieces. The result is a sustained, cohesive collection of essays attentive to the continuing significance of the tropes and languages of female captivity throughout history and today.

Dr. Rebecca Harrison
(Re)Adapting an Unstable Genre
The above epigraphs spotlight the varying depictions of Mrs. Hannah Dustin in the American literary landscape—that of heroine and hag—represented in Mather’s original narrative of Dustin’s captivity and Hawthorne’s fictional recasting of the event. The original Dustin narrative penned by Cotton Mather in 1697 and published in *Magnalia Christi Americana* told the tale of a helpless mother of eight taken captive by the Abenakis. During her captivity, Dustin’s eighth child, a newborn taken captive along with their nurse, is murdered by the Native Americans. After several weeks of captivity and the threat of having to participate in the gantlet, Dustin, her nurse...
Ms. Neff, and another white captive, slay their sleeping captors taking their scalps as proof of the trying ordeal. Mather frames her violent actions as sanctified and the carrying out of “God’s will” by defeating their Native American enemy. Writing over a century later, Nathaniel Hawthorne retools the Dustin narrative in his short story “The Dustin Family” published in 1836; in so doing, he critiques both Dustin’s actions and Mather’s framing of the event in service of the Puritan cause. Hawthorne’s fictional take on the captivity casts Mr. Dustin as the real hero and villainizes Mrs. Dustin, depicting her as a “bloody old hag” (Hawthorne 397). Ironically, in Hawthorne’s critique of Mather and Mrs. Dustin, he commits the same act he accuses Mather of: using the Dustin image to support his personal views and mission. Both Mather’s and Hawthorne’s representations of the Dustin captivity narrative illustrates the shifting attitudes towards female violence, and the patriarchal impulse to attempt to contain it. Their use and commodification of the Dustin image only authorizes potent femininity as long as it serves a patriarchal agenda. Both Mather’s and Hawthorne’s narratives, ultimately, neutralize the potency of the strong, virulent female body by resituating her actions within patriarchal constructs of either heroine or villain.

Mather uses the absence of white male authority to magnify the women’s exposure to the Native Americans; in so doing, it intensifies the danger both Dustin and Ms. Neff face. Mather focuses on Dustin and Ms. Neff as helpless victims rising to the occasion, and who save themselves becoming heroes when the patriarch exhibits weakness. Mather attempts to conjure sympathy for Mrs. Dustin immediately stating in the second sentence of the narrative, “In this Broil, one Hannah Dustin having lain-in’ about a Week, attended with her Nurse, Mary Neff, a Widow” staging the two women as vulnerable (Mather 58). Dustin’s vulnerability stems from her physical state, because she has just given birth to her eighth child, leaving her bedridden and unable to protect herself. Ms. Neff’s state of defenselessness is the result of her widow status robbing her of having male protection. Dustin and Neff’s only defense would have been Mr. Dustin who inconveniently is not present. Mather alludes to the patriarchy’s failure of the two women using Mr. Dustin as a representation of a gap in male protection saying, “he went in to inform his Wife of the horrible Distress come upon them. E’re she could get up [...] that utterly despairing to do her any Service he ran out after his Children” (Mather 58). Mr. Dustin is portrayed just as helpless and weak as Mrs. Dustin and Widow Neff. Mr. Dustin fails in his role as protector of the household; as he cannot save his wife
or infant child, he retreats, and in doing so, Mr. Dustin sacrifices Mrs. Dustin and Ms. Neff to save himself and the rest of the family. Through Mather’s dramatization of this scene, he paints the pair of women as martyrs, whom fall victim from lack of patriarchal protection. The women are, thus, not only the victims of the Native Americans, they are also victims of a subpar male leadership. Mather’s victimization of the duo allows him to later provide a justification of their horrifically violent acts.

Mather justifies Dustin’s violence by casting her as an agent of God where he utilizes her story to teach his congregation lessons about faith and salvation. He writes, while in captivity one of the Abenakis tells Dustin, “If your God will have you delivered, you shall be so!” Mather rebuts, “And it seems our God would have it so be” (Mather 59). The irony of this statement, comes from the slaughter Dustin enacts in the name of God and deliverance, which will result in the death of her host family. In Lorrayne Carroll’s *Rhetorical Drag: Gender Impersonation, Captivity and the Writing of History*, Carroll refers to the women Mather uses in his sermons as “Instruments”; she states, “The conventional Puritan proscription against a woman speaking in public was superseded by the powerful instructional potential of her recorded voice,” noting the potency of the female narrative voice (Carroll 18). Mather successfully seizes the didactic potential of the Dustin captivity narrative by presenting her story through his male voice and Puritan agenda. In fact, Dustin’s voice or self-reflective “I” is missing from her narrative altogether dominated and replaced with the voice of Mather. He tools the violent female body/voice by cloaking it with religious purpose. For example, prior to the Dustin narrative, Mather penned a sermon about two women accused of infanticide, and he reads the confession of one of the women, Elizabeth Emerson—written by himself, of course—at the end of his sermon. In Julie Fay’s “Hannah and Her Sister,” she remarks, “[Mather] could mine the rich material of […] women’s tragedies and thereby instill the fear of God in those who were straying, apparently in great numbers, from the fold” (Fay 5). Mather, thus, utilizes Emerson to evoke fear in sinners, while he uses Dustin to restore religious faith in his congregation and to illustrate the power of salvation. Mather adapts Dustin as an “instrument” to aid in his agenda of keeping his followers from straying away from the church (Carroll 18). Mather underscores Dustin’s reliance on her faith throughout her captivity which “made Duston his perfect ministerial instrument” (Carroll 58). Mather says, “the poor Women had nothing but Fervent Prayers to make their Lives
Comfortable or Tolerable” and “[the women] Pour[ed] out their Souls before the Lord” (Mather 59). Dustin’s reliance on God to deliver her from captivity extends to her use of violence, because she is mimicking the Biblical story of Jael with her murder of the Abenakis. Mather is able to paint Dustin as a hero, because he can render her narrative as an example of the favor awarded to God’s faithful servants likening her to Biblical heroes.

Further, Mather aligns the image of Mrs. Dustin with the Biblical heroine Jael who also commits murder in the name of the patriarchy. In order to show how women can be agents of God Mather concedes, “one of these women took up a resolution to imitate the action of Jael upon Sisera” drawing parallels between the murder and scalping of the sleeping Native Americans to the murder Jael commits (Mather 60). Jael, much like Dustin, kills a sleeping man as punishment for his transgressions against her husband and God. The Bible says:

But Jael, Heber’s wife, took a tent peg and seized a hammer in her hand, and went secretly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went through into the ground; for he was sound asleep and exhausted. So he died. And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking. (Judges 4:21-22)

Here, Jael becomes an unlikely, potent agent of God enacting violence and punishing transgressors in his name and, according to Mather, so too does Dustin through her act of scalping the Native Americans. Mather juxtaposes the image of Jael with Dustin’s image to contain the potency of Dustin’s violent body. Jael becomes known as the most blessed for her heroic actions and even has a hymn in her honor. Dustin’s reimagining as the second coming of Jael aligns her violent body with God and situates her as an agent of the patriarchy. Dustin’s violence frames her as the protector of Puritan culture from the encroachment of the Native Americans and the secular world, just as Jael did for Israel. By comparing Dustin to Jael, Mather neutralizes the ferocity of her violence, because she is acting on behalf of a righteous God, and her actions do not belong to her but to Him. The potency of the female body is contained through Mather’s characterization of Dustin as Jael because the potency of the violent female body is reassigned to a higher power restricting her agency. God becomes all powerful while reversing Dustin’s perceived act of agency to simply an act of religious obedience.
Mather further attempts to justify Dustin’s act of violence by utilizing the wilderness space of her captivity to create distance between Dustin, Puritan society, and its moral codes. Mather narrates, “and being where she had not her own life secured by any law unto her, she thought she was not forbidden by any law to take away the life of the murderers by whom her child had been butchered” illustrating Dustin’s presence in an state of disorder (Mather 60). Mather rationalizes Dustin’s violence by using the spatial setting of the wilderness to separate Dustin from the role of virtuous Puritan wife and mother she normally fulfills. Andreea Mingiuc argues, in “Revengeful Violence- Hannah Duston’s Captivity Narrative and The Puritan Paradox,” “the wilderness accounts for a lawless land not in the sense that is anti-law, but beyond or without it. What we encounter here is [...] a teleological suspension of ethics [...] her act is morally justifiable because she is outside the boundaries of civilization [...] the exponent of an entire community” (Minguic 293). Highlighting Dustin’s location away from a setting of Puritan patriarchal protection and morality allows Mather to focus purely on her human instincts. The wilderness space, thus, represents a place where the survival of the individual becomes the basis for a moral standard. By shifting the focus to Dustin’s situation in a lawless land, he creates room for her violence; in other words, one cannot break the law where no laws exist. Mather, thus, veils Dustin’s violence by making her the embodiment of order in a wilderness of chaos inhabited by the “savage” enemy wherein Dustin becomes the civil savage by avenging the death of her child. In so doing, Mather removes the stigma her actions would normally generate. Though the killings exhibit Dustin’s descent into momentary savagery, they are acceptable because she is helping rid white society of the Native American threat to their lives. Mather commodifies the Dustin image and repackages her as a hero, while using her narrative to grow his congregation and fame commodifying Dustin’s savagery. In Mather’s first sermon containing the Dustin narrative, there is not a mention of monetary reward simply because she had not been deemed worthy of reward yet. Mather’s final rewrite of the Dustin narrative divulges, “they came off, and received Fifty Pounds from the General Assembly of the Province [...] they received many Presents of Congratulations from their more private Friends; but none gave ‘em greater Taste of Bounty than Colonel Nicholson, the Governor of Maryland” (Mather 60). Dustin has been lavished in gifts in between the original writing of and Mather’s final rewrite of her narrative. The rewards Dustin receives are not the result of the valor

Manipulation of Female Identity 15
and bravery of her actions but the strategic staging of her narrative by Mather. Carroll argues, “the portrait of Hannah Duston as captive, victim, and heroine relies on Mather’s rendering her his figure, whose significance derives precisely from his interpretation” (Carroll 59). Mather flaunts Dustin’s “bounty” simply because he feels responsible for it, at least in part, because of his sermons depicting her as a heroine of God. The scalping bounties were band in Dustin’s native Haverhill in 1696. Dustin was taken captive in 1697 a few months later which would have made her scalps not eligible for reward. On Mather’s crusade to preserve the Puritan church and society, he would recite the sermon including Dustin’s narrative to any audience that would listen, tailoring it to bolster his convictions and support his agenda. Kathryn Whitford indicates, “Mather, then, was a combatant in a continuing religious war which happened to coincide with King William’s War” (Whitford 316). Which explains Mather’s motivation in continuing to build on the idea of Dustin as survivor and preserver of Puritan beliefs, and his utilization of her story as political and religious propaganda. The resulting monetary gifts from strangers and friends validate his inflation of the “Hannah Dustin the Hero” imagery constructed by himself. His inclusion of her bounty in his last two rewrites of her narrative reconstructs Dustin as a hero before God and man alike. The reward promotes the benefits of living a good Puritan life serving Mather’s political and religious agendas, because Dustin’s narrative signifies if one is righteous in his/her actions and concedes to God’s will, they will be rewarded. Mather boasts of the rewards Dustin receives in part as a result of his propagandized sermon. The gifts and bounty represent the acceptance of the male constructed heroic imagery of Dustin by white patriarchal society.

Mather’s construction of the Dustin narrative as that of a heroine is later taken up by male artists who see her as a signifier of American Nationalism. Around the nineteenth century the Dustin narrative was revitalized especially as a patriarchal aesthetic. Male artists also contain and control Dustin’s violence through their use of her image as a patriarchal aesthetic symbol commemorating her bravery in the unspoken war against the
Native Americans. The statues of Dustin erected in her honor portray her in a more classical light. In the statute erected in New Hampshire in 1874 by sculptor William Andrews, on Penacook Island—where she carried out the murders—Dustin appears ethereal, diverging from the savagery she participates in while an inhabitant there. In the rendering, Dustin is weaponless and stands up right looking off into the distance, “as a fearless and resolute defender of the frontier” (Griffin 1). In a later monument depicting Dustin, she continues to appear in the traditional garb of a Puritan woman, but has a tomahawk in hand. Barbara Cutter comments, “[The] Duston monuments emphasized her violence and simultaneously linked her to the nation’s virtue”; in the statues, Duston stands alone as the nation’s heroine (Cutter). Dustin becomes the embodiment of the nation’s triumph in the war against the Native Americans, and a patriarchal tool to spread the male agenda of nationalism. Monuments like Dustin’s statues were instances where, “the common soldier was commemorated” (Humphreys 162). Dustin’s violent body is literally contained within the marble rendering of her figure. The monument by Calvin H. Weeks unveiled in Dustin’s home Haverhill in 1879 depicts Dustin gripping a tomahawk in one hand and pointing her finger accusingly outwards with the other. The indicative tone of her stance places the blame of her violence elsewhere presumably on the Native Americans. The statue bolsters the colonists’ argument that their violence was a response to the Native American threat to their livelihood and cultural beliefs. Dustin could also, very well, be pointing at the colonist and blaming their negative attitudes towards the Native Americans for her misguided behavior. The condemnation of the Native Americans by patriarchal figureheads allow for Dustin’s devaluing of the lives of the Abenakis she mercilessly slays.

In opposition to Mather’s goal to perpetuate Dustin as an undisputable heroine, artistic renderings of the Dustin image elicit feelings contrary to Mather’s goal and the nationalists’ agendas, shifting the containment of the violent female body from the role of hero to villain. While also subtly critiquing her savagery, whether intentional or not, the artists realize the contradiction between the Mather’s rendition of the Dustin narrative and her actual actions. Mather confesses the murders of Dustin and her accomplices in his narrative, “they struck such Blows upon the Heads of their Sleeping Oppressors, that e’re they could any of them struggle into any effectual resistance […] where they bowed there they fell sown Dead” (Mather 60). The woman Mather would have us believe is Jael is actually a murderer of children, and the
art pieces oft times depict Dustin and her accomplices in the act of murdering the sleeping natives, but the visual representations of Dustin through painting and illustration convey more savagery than they do heroism. For instances, Junius Brutus Sterns painting *Hannah Duston Killing the Indians* depicts Dustin standing over some of the sleeping Abenakis, one of whom appears to have already met his fate, with a tomahawk in hand ready to strike. Behind Dustin stands an awake member of the tribe unarmed trying to stop her, and behind him stands a woman—who we can infer is Ms. Neff—in motion to strike him with her tomahawk. Linda Kim notes, contrary to Mather’s narrative, “Stearns was careful not to include the woman and child victims of Duston’s attack”; but, then, contradicting his impulse to portray Dustin as a hero, he illustrates her wielding a tomahawk as her murder weapon (Kim 86). Kim states, “By representing her with a tomahawk, Stearns represented Dustin “going native,” perhaps thereby containing her violence to a specifically native context”; Stearns deconstructs her hero image unintentionally (Kim 86). Some of Mather’s efforts to characterize Dustin as a civil savage are lost to the visual representation of her violent body. Also, interestingly enough, Leonardson is not present in the painting. Stearns removes the only link Dustin and Neff have with white patriarchal society during the murder by feminizing the other white figure in the painting. The exclusion of Samuel Leonardson, Dustin’s other collaborator, and future heir to the patriarchy distances him and the patriarchy from taking direct responsibility for Dustin’s actions. The alignment of the violent female body with the Native American enemy shifts Dustin from heroine to villain.

In the emergence of the abundance of contradicting visual representations of Dustin, author Nathaniel Hawthorne publishes a rewrite of the Dustin narrative entitled “The Duston Family” in which he casts Dustin in the male constructed role of villain. Hawthorne’s agenda varies extremely from Mather’s partly because of his historical distance from the conflict with the Native Americans and his objection to the social and economic mobility of the white female. Hawthorne believes women are forgetting their place within the patriarchy and exhibiting too much agency in the public sphere. Hawthorne’s rewrite criticizes Dustin for the misuse of her independence within captivity. Hawthorne contains Dustin’s female body by casting her in the role of
villain, extending his critique to Mather as well. Hawthorne contains Dustin’s violence by making visible the violence that should be apparent and chastising Dustin for her abhorrent crime in his narrative, emphasizing her as a villain:

She took all ten scalps, and left the island, which bears her name to this very day. According to our notion, it should be accursed, for her sake. Would that the bloody old hag had been drowned in crossing Contocook river, or that she had sunk over head and ears in a swamp, and been there buried, till summoned forth to confront her victims at the Day of Judgement. (Hawthorne 397)

Hawthorne frames Dustin as a violent attacker by referring to the Abenakis as victims and insisting Dustin should have been punished for her transgressions. Unlike Mather, Hawthorne uses Dustin’s image for his political agenda as criticism of the nation’s senseless violence. Cutter emphasizes, “Hawthorne’s attitude toward Duston and Mather illuminates the connection between Duston’s violence and the nation’s violence” (Cutter); in agreeance, Whitford says, “Hawthorne […] deliberately discards the evidence that Hannah acted within the established norms of her society” (320). Continuing with this idea, Hawthorne situates Dustin within the patriarchy as a wife and mother who embodies the immorality of her society. Hawthorne, unlike Mather, believes Dustin should be held accountable for her violence and suggests instead of restoring order in a chaotic land, Dustin becomes a source of the disorder. Hawthorne contains Dustin’s violent body by weighing her down with accountability for her actions, insisting she will be judged in the same light as the murderous Native Americans for her immoral actions. As a representation of nationalism, Hawthorne utilizes Dustin’s violent body as a hyper visual display, unveiling the results of an overly violent nation. Dustin’s potency is neutralized through Hawthorne’s critique and the transformation of it as a result of a corrupt patriarchy.

Hawthorne’s narrative resituates Mr. Dustin as head of the household buoying his strength of character as a way to belittle Dustin and contain her violent body. Hawthorne inserts large chunks of narrative centered on Mr. Dustin, whom was barely present in the original narrative. Hawthorne mentions Mr. Dustin in his narrative before he even mentions Mrs. Dustin, the actual captive of the captivity narrative, making her a secondary character in her own narrative. Hawthorne boast about Mr.
Dustin exclaiming, “Goodman Duston heard the war whoop and alarm, and […] immediately set off full speed to look after the safety of his family” (Hawthorne 395). Hawthorne does not stop there; he also victimizes Mr. Dustin stating, “But if ever a poor mortal was in trouble, and perplexity, and anguish of spirit, that man was Mr. Duston” (Hawthorne 395). Mather justifies Dustin’s crimes by highlighting the absence of the patriarchy in his version of the Dustin captivity narrative, but, contrary to Mather, Hawthorne makes the patriarchy overly present by way of Mr. Dustin. Hawthorne’s placing of Mr. Dustin in the narrative before Mrs. Dustin, and characterization of Mr. Dustin as the real hero, places Mrs. Dustin beneath him. Hawthorne contains the violence in Dustin’s narrative by literally sandwiching her in between male control in the text. Hawthorne opens and closes his Dustin narrative with utterances about the valiance of Mr. Dustin.

Hawthorne’s realignment of Dustin with her role as mother and wife by only referring to her as “Mrs. Duston” in his narrative, neutralizes her violence and allows him to villainize her (Hawthorne 395-397). Hawthorne binds Dustin with her role of virtuous wife and mother creating accountability for her actions. Anna-Marie Weis regards Dustin as, “an embodiment of nineteenth century female individualism” (Weis 3). When Mr. Dustin left his wife to face the Abenankis without him Hawthorne assures, “he had such knowledge of the good lady’s character, as afforded him a comfortable hope that she would hold her own, even in a contest with a whole tribe of Indians” (Hawthorne 395). Hawthorne justifies Thomas’s abandonment of his wife, because her virtue of character should prove useful to her during her captivity. Hawthorne frames Mr. Dustin’s abandonment as an act of faith in his wife’s ability to demonstrate morality, even in a lawless land, and she fails him. Hawthorne conveys this saying, “[Mr. Dustin] that tender hearted, yet valiant man, her husband will be remembered as long as the deeds of old times are told […] But how different is her renown from his!” emphasizing Mr. Dustin’s righteousness and shunning Mrs. Dustin for lack of it. Hawthorne retools the narrative as a cautionary tale of the dangers of the independent female. Through his narrative, Hawthorne continues to contain and neutralize the potency of the female body by assigning the responsibility of the female action to man. Mr. Dustin’s accountability for his wife’s action stems from his inherent coverture of Mrs. Dustin and her actions. Hawthorne is able to label Dustin as a villain because she acted contrary to her husband and causes him to identify with her misbehavior.
Mather and Hawthorne tool the Dustin narrative to fit two contradicting agendas. Mather uses Dustin in an attempt to save his waning congregation, and Hawthorne utilizes Dustin to criticize women for overstepping their boundaries within patriarchal society. Although, they are both guilty of manipulating the potency of the female body for male gain they both have a hand in solidifying Dustin’s eternal status as a potent and unsuspecting agent of patriarchal control. This gives rise to the question of whether male constructs of femininity are the real captors of Hannah Dustin. Over the course of three centuries in a multitude of artistic forms ranging from literature to paintings to monuments and even to a liquor decanter, the Dustin image has been utilized perpetually as propaganda of male agendas, thus, allowing the Dustin image and narrative to suffer endlessly. Dustin faces more torment and degradation through the white male’s use of her narrative’s didactic power than she faced as the captive of the Native Americans. The white patriarchal constructed labels of heroine and villain become shackles on Dustin’s body, neutralizing her to no more than a spokesperson of the patriarchal agenda.

NOTES

1. A term meaning a woman that has just given birth and confined to bed rest. The lack of technology and medical assistance would have rendered child birthing very taxing on the body given reason for bed rest for a couple weeks after giving birth.

2. Elizabeth Emerson is the younger sister of Hannah Dustin who was tried and hung for the infanticide of her twins conceived and born to her out of wedlock. The concealment or murdering of a child born out of wedlock was illegal, and she was tried by a jury of midwives, amongst the jury that convicted Emerson was Goody Mary Neff.

3. King William’s war (Second Native American War) was a war between New England and New France with the aid of their respective Native American allies.

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IDENTIFYING OUTSIDE THE PURITAN REALM: Using Louise Erdrich’s “Captivity” to Underline Mary Rowlandson’s Found Agency in Rowlandson’s Narrative

BY SARA PATE

“There is where the self is clearly distinguished from the other, and borders between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and lies are stable and uncontested. Home is social, ideological, discursive.”
—Lisa Logan

In 1682, six years after Wampanoag Indians held her captive, Mary Rowlandson wrote *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*. In Rowlandson’s Puritan culture, Deborah Madsen in *Feminist Theory and Literary Practice* explains that women were “members of a powerless class” (50). With the assistance of a Puritan minister who edited and framed the document, Mary Rowlandson assured that Puritan society would not critique her published narrative and the ways in which her experiences with the Native Americans defied accepted constructs of white womanhood and the Puritan patriarchy. In 2003, over 300 years after Rowlandson’s captivity, Louise Erdrich penned “Captivity,” a poem based on Mary Rowlandson and her time with the Native Americans. Louise Erdrich, descended from a Chippewa Indian mother and a German-American father, engages and takes on Rowlandson’s account and, in so doing, reconstructs Rowlandson as a willing captive who experienced a freeing identity with the Native American tribe. Ultimately, despite the framing of her nar-
rative as God’s dealings with her, Rowlandson’s captivity reveals found agency with the Native Americans, agency Erdrich’s “Captivity” seizes on in the original as she reinterprets Rowlandson’s narrative.

On February 10, 1676, Wampanoag and their allies, the Narraganset Indians, attacked Mary Rowlandson’s Puritan home in Lancaster, Massachusetts. The Narraganset Indians held her captive for eleven weeks and five days. Mary Rowlandson’s account was the first captivity narrative to be published in New England that was written by a woman. However, her narrative is inserted between a preface by the leading Puritan minister Increase Mather and a sermon from her husband Joseph Rowlandson for authentication. As well a patriarchal framework, one minister also prefaced Joseph Rowlandson’s piece, and Mather edited Mary Rowlandson’s narrative to prove that Rowlandson’s words were true and chaste. Mary Rowlandson interprets her experience through a religious lens, relating every trial and tribulation to God’s word; however, she also contradicts the Puritan faith by her actions and experiences during her captivity. Throughout her narrative, Rowlandson struggles with the traumas of being snatched away from her Puritan life; her relationships with the Indians and defying Puritan standards by questioning what is right or wrong simultaneously reveal the captivity Rowlandson experiences in her home culture through the Puritan patriarchy.

From the moment the Natives seize her and her children from her English home, Mary Rowlandson gains access to freedom from the dominant male atmosphere of Lancaster culture. Bridget Bennet in “The Crisis of Restoration: Mary Rowlandson’s Lost Home” explains, “The destruction of [Rowlandson’s] house and family […] is depicted as awakening her fuller understanding of what home mean” (329). Separated from her husband and children, Mary Rowlandson immediately begins to question her old life as she moves into the unknown. Rowlandson becomes aware that she must provide for herself in order to survive. As she moves into the forest with the Indians, Rowlandson’s female identity and agency expand, while the wilderness tests her Puritan beliefs. Extending her liberty from her place in the Puritan hierarchy, Rowlandson herself brings her freedom into focus as she declares that a Native American maid came to “call me home” (Rowlandson 37). Here, Rowlandson’s narrative calls the Indians’ dwelling home; these same people burn down her Puritan dwelling, forcing her to create another space away from the life she knew. Logan determines that “[a]s the narrator progresses, it becomes clear that she relates physical space closely to her sense of identity and value” (257). As Rowlandson treads deeper
into the woods and further away from her burning home, she realizes she cannot go back to her Puritan life. Mary Rowlandson finds refuge with the Natives, where she discovers growth in her own self. Rowlandson explains, “Yet the Lord still shewed mercy to me, and upheld me; and as he wounded me with one hand, so he healed me with the other” (Rowlandson 16). Treading through the woods with the Native Americans establishes a hope for Rowlandson to find peace in her captivity. Logan states that “Home is where the self is clearly distinguished from the other, and borders between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and lies are stable and uncontested. Home is social, ideological, discursive” (Logan 257). As Rowlandson identifies the Native space as her home, she begins to destabilize Puritan society and struggles to point out the good in a hierarchy where white men are held superior while women tend to the children.

Much like Rowlandson’s narrative, Erdrich’s piece seizes on the freedom Rowlandson gains when she enters captivity. Erdrich begins her poem, “The stream was swift, and so cold/ I thought I would be sliced in two” (1-2). As she experiences in her narrative, Rowlandson has to quickly move away from her Puritan home. Erdrich places Rowlandson at the point in her narrative that is life or death. Rowlandson can drown, die of hypothermia, or decide to let the Indians save her. Erdrich’s opening lines allow the reader to imagine the hardship Rowlandson endured when entering the Indian community. Erdrich engages Mary Rowlandson’s fight to stay alive and the difficulties of being punished for her transgressions. When the stream begins to overbear Rowlandson, Erdrich continues, “But he [an Indian] dragged me from the flood/ by the ends of my hair” (3-4). A Native America gives her new life; the water washes her of her sins, and the Native is the one to cleanse her. Her master frees her from the shackles of the Puritan patriarchy.

When her children become separated from her and one dies from a gunshot wound, Rowlandson loses her connection to the role of Mother defined by a patriarchal and Puritan controlled society. When her wounded child becomes sick, malnourished, and ultimately dies, the Indians give her the ability to mourn. Lisa Logan’s suggests that “[Mary Rowlandson’s] experience in the wilderness robs her of her identity, which is dependent on her place: minister’s wife, mother, sister, friend, housekeeper. But her captors strip her of her roles” (266). As her world has literally been taken away from Rowlandson, the Native Americans allow her to define her own experience separated from Puritan standards. Although her older daughter and son live in a camp not far from
hers, Rowlandson decides when she visits her children. At one point in her narrative, Rowlandson starts to go see her son but gets distracted. She explains, “I turned homeward again, and met with my Master; he shewed me the way to my son” (Rowlandson 26). The Indians do not hold her away from visiting her son and daughter in different camps. In actuality, Rowlandson decides to abandon her role as mother completely. She determines when she wants to enact traditional motherhood. Puritan motherhood involved sacrificing everything for the betterment of a woman’s child. However, Rowlandson seeks to establish agency by disallowing the Puritan standards of a mother for the betterment of her body. Rowlandson explains, “the squaw was boiling horses feet; then she cut me off a little piece, and gave one of the English children a piece […] Then I took it of the child, and eat it myself, and savory it was to my taste” (Rowlandson 36). During a moment of hunger, Rowlandson loses the ability to care for children over herself. She continues to identify outside the Puritan normative role of Mother and, instead, focuses on ensuring her own survival over her own kind. Rowlandson ultimately defies the role of a Puritan mother by driving herself to more importance than those that are smaller than her. While forging a barrier between her and her children, she replaces the selfless labor of her children with manual labor of trade that allows her access to her own agency and freedom. This separation for motherhood allows Rowlandson to contemplate her Puritan lifestyle and how she as a female fits into her English society.

Erdrich, too, focuses on Rowlandson’s inability to mother and her will to survive. Erdrich brings to focus that Rowlandson “could not suckle and [her] child’s wail put [the Indians] in danger” (Erdrich 14-15). “Captivity” reiterates that Mary Rowlandson loses the ability to be a mother and take care of her children. Rowlandson realizes that she is unfit to carry on the role of mother in the Indian world, because she risks damaging the Indians’ community. Where Rowlandson cannot mother, the Native women take over and fill in for her. Erdrich explains that “[Master] had a woman/with teeth black and glittering/She fed the child milk of acorns” (16-18). Erdrich emphasizes the notion that Rowlandson must give in to Native American culture, because she is unable to provide for her child. In Puritan tradition, women are forced to take on motherhood singularly; however, Native Americans function on a communal-type motherhood. Erdrich identifies the restrictive nature of the Puritan faith. Through Erdrich’s highlighting of communal motherhood and Rowlandson’s inability to provide, Erdrich helps bring
to light the community that is actually imprisoning her, the Puritans. Erdrich ends her second stanza, “The forest closed, the light deepened” (Erdrich 19). Her surroundings become her mother; the wilderness tends to Rowlandson and her child. The forest takes her child away, so Rowlandson can establish her own understanding of her surroundings and begin to understand who she is as an individual.

In the Native community, sources of water surround Rowlandson and the Indians; however, the trauma of losing Puritan connections suspend her culture and allow her to control her own baptism. Madsen explains, “In her narrative, Mary Rowlandson describes her captivity as punishment for her failings as a Puritan, a woman, a wife, and a mother. She has failed because she has lost her sense of identification with a sexual class (Puritan Woman) in favor of her own individualism” (48). Rowlandson believes defying her place causes her grief and destruction; however, her trauma sets her out to identify further from Puritan womanhood. During her time with the Natives, Rowlandson declares, “[Master] asked me, When I washed me? I told him not this month, then he fetched me some water himself, and bid me wash, and gave me the glass to see how I looked” (Rowlandson 37). Her master proposes that she bathe, giving her the option to bathe or not. In her Puritan society, a male, most likely her husband, would declare that she wash immediately. Rowlandson would be unable to go so long dirtied and unclean. In addition to being allowed a choice, Rowlandson begins to know her captor and her captivity. By giving her the agency to be clean, the Indians allow her to have her own baptism. The Indians ask her to wash away the heartache of her Puritan life and the difficult times of captivity and start anew. An Indian male gives her a choice to bathe and rid herself from her cultural qualifications. Her trauma allows Rowlandson to assimilate as well as wash away her transgressions. Through bathing, Rowlandson lets go of the code of behavior determined by Puritanism.

In the search for food, Mary Rowlandson begins to have agency away from Puritan culture. Rowlandson begins to understand that she can only survive by what she can procure herself. In the first chapter of *Captivity and Sentiment*, Michelle Burnham underscores how Rowlandson’s narrative “documents her assumption of a role among [the Natives] that is a radical alternative to available roles for colonial New England women” (26). Rowlandson takes on the role of keeping herself alive. No longer able to rely solely on what Puritan or Native men give her, she must work or beg for each meal. She begins to realize she can only survive by what she allows herself to take. Rowlandson states, “one asked me
to make a shirt for her Papoos, for which she gave me a mess of Broth” (29). Both begging and bartering cause her to relish each piece of bear or ground nut obtained. Bartering also allows her to stand up to men in the Indian community, permitting Rowlandson to fall further away from patriarchal ideals. During a moment of trading with an Indian, a Native does not exchange his side of the bargain. Standing up for herself towards a man allows her agency that would never occur in her male-controlled Puritan society. In a way, Rowlandson takes on characteristic of the “savage” that Mather’s prologue develops (Rowlandson 11). She goes into the tents of the Natives to beg for food and scrounges around for whatever she can sink her teeth into. Rowlandson gains nourishment by working hard to obtain the food she desires.

Mary Rowlandson’s will to eat food from the Natives signifies that identity itself is mutable. Food becomes an establishment for identifying away from the desires of her English culture. Now separated from Puritan morals for three weeks, Mary Rowlandson engages in the Indian delicacies so she can survive. Rowlandson refers to Indians food as “filthy trash” (21). Using this term for food allows Rowlandson to keep up her Puritan image. However, after experiencing starvation, she moves away from her Puritan prejudices which leads her to realize the food is “pleasant and savory to [her] taste” (Rowlandson 21-22). Puritans believe that their kind are born into salvation, and therefore cannot change. However, Rowlandson’s taste for the Native’s food change as she grows closer to the Indians. This fact disables Puritan beliefs as one teaches what is good and bad; Rowlandson learns to change, which leads to her identity changing. Because she finds Native food delectable, Rowlandson has the power to enjoy and relish in what the Puritans would find unclean. Rowlandson finds that as her taste changes, she starts to question the cultural construct of savagery. More importantly, the food serves to further her relationship with the Indians.

Food starts to help reveal Mary Rowlandson becoming more communal. Rowlandson gains the food and nourishment she desires and, in so doing, finds agency and value in her labor. Rowlandson is allowed a voice and power through her act of denial, as well as her persistence to get what she was promised. Rowlandson announces, “not one of [the Indians] ever offered me the least abuse of unchastely to me, in word or action” (Rowlandson 46). Rowlandson must say these words, so the Puritans will not wonder if she has become tainted. Puritan retribution frightens her. She is still ultimately afraid of patriarchal authority. As Madsen demonstrates “… [Rowlandson] offers us a basis for criticizing
the strategies whereby women are disempowered in traditional patriarchal society” (48). By acknowledging that Rowlandson has to identify that she was untainted by the Indians, Rowlandson gains power to do as she pleases without facing that retribution. Rowlandson has the ability to do what she wants to obtain what she desires. As she begins to need the Indians for nourishment, she gains a relationship with her master. Rowlandson allows herself to befriend her master and long for his return. Rowlandson explains in the Twelfth Remove that her master “seemed to [her] the best Friend that [she] had [...]” (Rowlandson 28). Rowlandson gains the ability to make friends with not only a male, but her Puritan community’s “enemy.” Her friendship with her master results in more freedoms as she is permitted to wander away from camp to barter and gain nourishment. The Indians trust she will not run away, giving her the ability to do as she please and visit other camps to see her older children also. Another Indian comments to Mary Rowlandson, “he seems to be your good friend” (Rowlandson 40). Her Indian friendship allows her the power to choose who she wants to associate with, breaking down the Puritan bias that Mather describes in Rowlandson’s preface when condemning the Native as “Heathen” and having “malicious” spirit (7).

While associating with the Native Americans, Rowlandson gains understanding of the language of the Indians for her own personal use, giving her agency. The Natives allow her a voice in her own saving as well as the desires of the camp. During the Fifth Remove, Rowlandson explains, “Being very faint I asked my Mistress to give me one spoonful of the Meal, but she would not give me a taste” (21). The Indians understand Rowlandson, and she understands the Natives. Rowlandson gains agency by learning some type of the language and using this way of communication to gain nourishment, barter, and ask advice. In her narrative, she uses certain Native words like “Papoos” for child (Rowlandson 29). Rowlandson mixes idioms of her own native language with those of the Indians. Rowlandson declares that “They [the Indians] bid me speak...” (Rowlandson 38). Knowing the language leads to an eventual friendship with the Indians and her master. Burnham explains that Rowlandson’s conversations with the Indians “reveal a development in Rowlandson’s ability to converse with her captor, as well as a growing complexity of interaction that involves both a greater mutual interest and a greater shared hostility” (23). She gains agency by knowing the language and showing initiative to learn; Rowlandson gains the ability
to her own understanding of civil versus savage, while questioning her
tolerance of the Puritan patriarchy.

Erdrich in her poem also takes on Rowlandson's mutable commu-
nion and creates a relationship of sexual communion with her master.
Erdrich first identifies Rowlandson's master as a savior type, because he
saves her from death; he “dragged [her] from the flood” (Erdrich 3).
Erdrich sets up the idea that Rowlandson's captor allows her to be alive
in more than a literal sense. In “Captivity,” Mary Rowlandson begins
to fear that she knows her captor too well and her sense of passion
and love for him appears when “[Mary] had grown to recognize his
face” and “could distinguish it from the others” (Erdrich line 5-6). Her
captor has become more than just another Indian. He challenges her
preconceived notions that all Native Americans appear the same—ugly
and threatening. Because Rowlandson no longer imagines all Indians
as similar and undesirable, Erdrich can touch upon the same idea that
Rowlandson's narrative describes: the mutability of identity. Yael Ben-
Zvi “Up And Down With Mary Rowlandson: Erdrich’s And Alexie's
Versions Of ‘Captivity’” states, “As [“Captivity”] unfolds, it is imagined
Rowlandson accepts her captors' love medicine […]” (28). Even though
Rowlandson’s actual piece does not specify a passion for her master,
Erdrich’s piece enhances the notion that Rowlandson sets her master
apart from the other Indians. Erdrich creates a relationship with Row-
landson and her master in a way that Rowlandson becomes a mistress.
By allowing Rowlandson to have such an attachment to her master,
Erdrich further deconstructs the notion that the Indians are savage as
Erdrich’s Rowlandson accepts her master as her love interest. Erdrich
emphasizes Rowlandson’s feeling of unease that God must have distaste
for her relationship with the Indians. Though Erdrich goes further in
naming that “God blasted fire from half-buried stumps,” she explains
that “[Rowlandson’s master] did not notice God’s wrath” (Erdrich 36,
35). Because he does not see anything wrong with his relationship with
Rowlandson, Rowlandson’s Master is able to “cut the cord that bound
[her] to the tree” (Erdrich 29-30). In this instance, Rowlandson’s captor
breaks her from her tree: her husband, her religion, and the society she
once lived in. In his article “Early American Literature as A Networked
Field: Mary Rowlandson, Louise Erdrich, Sherman Alexie,” Wai-chee
Dimock explains “[…] it is not the case that God is [Rowlandson’s]
sole and exclusive companion” (114). Her relationship with her master
jeopardizes the ability to believe that her Puritan faith holds true as God
should be her only companion while captive. By having Rowlandson
accept a sexual union with her master, Erdrich accepts the change in identity of not only Rowlandson but also how Rowlandson identifies the Natives.

In addition to gaining physical agency, Rowlandson achieves a sense of spiritual agency as she has the ability to interpret the bible on her own terms. Madsen reveals that “Puritans referred to themselves as a community of “visible saints”; that is individuals who would collectively find salvation after death. But this agreement depended crucially upon every member of the community maintaining a high standard of conduct” (48). Rowlandson establishes in her narrative an uncertainty that she will follow the “visible saints” to salvation. Rowlandson declares, “One of the Indians […] asked me if I would have a Bible, he had got one in his Basket, I was glad of it, and asked him, whether he thought the Indians would let me read? He answered yes” (19). The Indians allow her to further her relationship with God, and they are the ones to give her access to her own spiritual growth. Rowlandson uses her interpretation to understand the landscape of life. Rowlandson explains, “God did not give [the English] courage or activity to go over after us; we were not ready for great a mercy of deliverance: if we had been, God would have found a way for the English to have passed this River […]” (22).

Rowlandson becomes incapable of seeing how Puritans could know they are redeemed if the Lord would not allow them to pass. Logan states, “In writing about her experience, Rowlandson recounts carefully her discovery of her spiritual role while in captivity, a redefinition of self that enables her survival” (Logan 263). She does not need an elder man to tell her how to read or relate a verse as the Puritans believe. Each verse she writes aids in her experiences with the Indians and her interpretation of herself. Mary Rowlandson finds comfort in establishing her own interpretation of the bible and even shares those beliefs with other women captives such as Goodwife Joslin. Therefore, Mary Rowlandson’s captivity allows her to decode the bible and her experience as a woman on the frontier, because she alone must find her own “holy end.” The bible allows Rowlandson to grow in her experience, as well as the faith she procures.

While Erdrich also grasps Rowlandson’s ideology of spirituality, she emphasizes Rowlandson’s ability to decide to believe in God’s wrath. Because Rowlandson does have a relationship with her master, Erdrich states that Rowlandson, “hid [her] face in [her] dress, fearing He would burn [them] all (37). Even though God’s retribution scares Rowlandson, Erdrich highlights that there is no divine wrath. Rowlandson’s fear is only
temporary as Erdrich determines that being afraid of being burned and condemned would disappear. She states, “but this, too, passed” (Erdrich 38). Rowlandson loses the fear of God when dealing with the Indians, because Erdrich knows that no harm will be done to Rowlandson. By taking on Rowlandson’s voice, Erdrich enables Rowlandson to be fearless of God’s reckoning. Erdrich even identifies Rowlandson’s need to use her faith to determine what she believes of the English. Erdrich’s Rowlandson declares, “We were pursued by God’s agents/ or pitch devils; I did not know” (Erdrich 10-11). Erdrich relates Rowlandson’s spirituality to her indecisive judgement on what she believes the Puritan are as a community. Erdrich’s Rowlandson struggles to decide if in fact Puritans are the unholy beings, or if they hold the key to salvation. Even in Erdrich’s poem, Rowlandson tries to decide what is good by her own governing ideas of her God.

The mournful conclusion to Mary Rowlandson’s original narrative highlights Rowlandson’s difficulty to grasp what is outside the four walls of Puritan society; however, she finds that life as an Indian is not any less bearable than the English. Rowlandson’s narrative cannot decipher what holds good and what remains evil. Rowlandson states, “when others are sleeping mine eyes are weeping” (Rowlandson 50). When Mary Rowlandson does return and begins making a new home with the English, sleep evades her. Her thoughts constantly remind Rowlandson of the lifestyle she lived with her master and her tribe. Rowlandson struggles to find out where she belongs. Rowlandson explains, “I was not before so much hem’d in with the merciless and cruel Heathen, but now as much with pitiful, tenderhearted, and compassionate Christians” (Rowlandson 47). She no longer categorizes herself with the Puritans and struggles to fit in to society. Living with the Indians allows her to see outside the social confines of the English and forget about the confines of being a lady. The need now was to be herself, to be needed for more than the Puritan duty of taking care of children and being a wife. As Restoration comes to an end and Rowlandson settles back into Lancaster, Mary Rowlandson continues to question the patriarchal system. As her narrative closes, Mary Rowlandson admits, “I have learned to look beyond present and smaller troubles, and to be quieted under them, as Moses said, Exod. 14.13. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord” (Rowlandson 51). Rowlandson determines fitting in to society does not outline her worth or character. She must “stand still” and play the part as a Puritan woman until God grants her and other women the right to define themselves from man. Mary Rowlandson in her narrative may
physically be back in Lancaster with her English brethren, but she can never be the woman she began her captivity as. Rowlandson states, “I can say in some measure, as David did, it is good for me that I have been afflicted,” because Rowlandson becomes aware of her own struggle with her English society and their patriarchal movement (Rowlandson 51). As Logan explains, “Her work exhibits a tension between her desire for the stability of ‘restoration’ and the need to resist its limitations” (Logan 273). Rowlandson will question her place and identity because of her captivity and relationship with those that burned her house down and bought her.

As “Captivity” ends, Erdrich’s construction of Mary Rowlandson continues to question the patriarchal system. In Erdrich’s final stanza, Rowlandson “struck the earth, / in time, begging it to open / to admit me” (Erdrich 53-55). Erdrich creates a Rowlandson that desires to stay with her captor. Erdrich’s Rowlandson desires that the Earth take her life so she does not have to put on a show towards the Puritans. She no longer wants to conform to patriarchal standards or identify the Indians at lesser value than the English. Ben-Zvi asserts, “Erdrich appropriates Rowlandson’s voice, reworks the legacy’s emotional clichés, and reverses Sovereignty and Goodness’s emphasis on Puritan conversion by imagining Rowlandson’s post captivity longing to return to her captors’ world” (23). Erdrich’s interpretation of Rowlandson would rather die than to leave her Native Americans behind. She desperately wants to stay with the “savages.” Erdrich, again, emphasizes that the patriarchal system Rowlandson returns to ends up leaving her unsatisfied. Erdrich stresses the uneasiness of identifying as an outcast as well as the desire to find where Rowlandson can fit into the patriarchal realm. In “Resistant History: Revisiting the Captivity Narrative in ‘Captivity’ and Black Robe: Isaac Jogues,” Robin Fast suggests “Erdrich’s captive knows herself to be effectively excluded from both worlds, her former certainties undone, the possibility of a new way of seeing and being decisively cut off,” which correlates with Mary Rowlandson’s uncertainty of belonging back in the position on the spectrum that she began (74). Although Erdrich insinuates that Rowlandson desires to be back in the realm of the Indians, she also makes the notion that Rowlandson asserts “[…] in the dark I see myself/as I was outside their circle” (Erdrich 47-48). Erdrich brings to focus Rowlandson’s inability to fit back into her Puritan home. Rowlandson can no longer relate to her Puritan community. Because Rowlandson from the beginning thought the Natives were savage and unjust, she acknowledges that she was an outcast in the
Indian society. However, now she can see that the Puritans are unjust. In “Captivity,” Rowlandson, once rescued, sees “no truth in things” (Erdrich 39). She determines that the Puritan patriarchy cannot be the only way to send her to Heaven. Erdrich feeds on the hesitation established in Rowlandson’s narrative. In Louise Erdrich’s interpretation, Mary Rowlandson feels guilty that she longs for her captor. She longs for the earth to admit her as one of the Natives and let her captive “feed [her] honey from the rock” (Erdrich 59). Rowlandson cannot go back to her Puritan home as the same woman. Even in Erdrich’s poem, Rowlandson feels like an outsider.

Erdrich’s poem, written 300 years after Rowlandson’s narrative, not only seizes upon captivity, but also suggests an alignment between women and the Native Americans. Dimock reiterates that “Louise Erdrich’s poem [...] must be seen in this light: as a reminder that there is more than one story here, just as there is more than one connecting node, one direction in the flow of information” (118). Fascinated with the legacy of Mary Rowlandson, Erdrich allows individuals to see remanences of conflict in Native people along with the suppression the patriarchy enforces on women. In her narrative, Mary Rowlandson encounters many lessons through her traumatic experiences that allow her to see the Native Americans as victims of colonization. If the Natives are actually people and valuable, then identity is also mutable; the society that each person lives in can also be changed by spreading the struggles of both women and minorities. Captivity gives agency by allowing those that are held captive to see the disorganized structure of the community they once lived in. Ultimately, Rowlandson’s community holds her captive. The patriarchy she once called home grasps any sense of freedom she once had as a woman. She is now confined by motherhood, one of the first ideologies she left in the wilderness.

However, as Bennet states, “her experiences mean that she can never again be the same young wife and mother she was before the ordeal she has experienced […] As [Rowlandson] shapes her post captivity life and creates her new home she fashions herself in conjunction with newly emerging colonial sensibilities” (331). Mary Rowlandson will never be the woman she was before captivity, because she now realizes that she is held hostage in her own world. Women, just as the Natives, are held to a lower standard than the white man. As the Natives continue to try to break free of the standards of their reservations, women continue to fight for equality in a patriarchal system.
WORKS CITED


As Caroline Gordon finishes her short story “The Captive,” she thinks, “I feel sorry about the Indians, [...] (Waldron 98). Her time spent rewriting William Connelley’s historical account “Eastern Kentucky Papers: The Founding of Harman’s Station with An Account of The Indian Captivity of Mrs. Jennie Wiley and the Exploration and Settlement of the Big Sandy Valley in the Virginias And Kentucky,” specifically the section on Jennie Wiley’s captivity, connects her with the Natives in her narrative. Jennie Wiley, wife of Thomas Wiley and mother of ten children, survives captivity by Natives in 1790. Although five of her children die during the attack on her home in the valley of Walker’s Creek, Virginia, five were born to her after her return to her husband. Historian William Connelley transcribes Wiley’s account given to him by her son in order to unify the readers and perpetuate westward expansion. His account, published in 1910, fights to give an accurate portrayal of Wiley’s captivity by the Shawnee and Cherokee Natives to show the atrocities she faces before her eventual escape and rescue by Henry Skaggs. His narrative also underscores the frontiersman, Wiley’s husband and children, and other accounts of attacks made by the Natives in the founding of Harman’s Station. Caroline Gordon, recognizing the gaps in his
account, refashions Connelley’s narrative to give depth and emotion to Wiley’s character. Gordon’s fictionalization of the true historical account allows her to give the main character female agency while still keeping to the original narrative. Gordon’s version receives publication in 1932 in the last edition of *Hound and Horn*.

Although women who the natives take captive usually experience the horrific loss of a child, some women gain certain freedoms in the process. Gordon’s narrative envisions freedom through a childless life and portrays this effectively in her fictional captivity narrative. Her short story shows a woman’s ability to navigate the forest alone and away from cultural gender scripts, to display an independent nature. Gordon chooses to “re-edit” a narrative with a male author and “revise [it] to challenge cultural forces and myth […]” (Harrison 169). Ultimately, Gordon sees in Connelley’s narrative of Wiley an unfinished story that she alters by deliberately removing Wiley’s pregnancy and childbirth, effectively killing off Wiley as “mother” in order to envision a woman free from a culturally constructed identity. Caroline Gordon’s “The Captive,” thus, rewrites Jenny Wiley’s captivity narrative transcribed by William Connelley to challenge restrictive gender scripts set by a patriarchal society and, in so doing, creates a space for the possibility of independent womanhood.

As a male historian, Connelley’s transcript of Wiley’s captivity narrative carries with it the patriarchal, white male agenda of westward expansion. Connelley transcribes his narrative through an account given by Wiley’s son. At this point, the male agenda becomes the only agenda. To give credit to Wiley’s son, Connelley states, “I knew him intimately and long, and I never heard his reputation for truth and veracity brought into question” (Connelley 19-20), which shows that the narrative’s credibility comes from men and not directly from Wiley. Although the account claims to be a true story of Wiley’s captivity, “no woman had a voice in either the planning or the actual publication” (Jonza 86). As Boyle says, “Understanding the possible bias in her son’s narrative, Connelley provides the accounts of others who claim knowledge of the story and supplements his report with a great deal of history” (82). The bias opinions of Connelley and the son support the expansion of the American settlements into the Native’s land. Connelley’s account of the Harman’s Station consistently refers to the Native Americans as the “mongrel hordes of painted savages” that attack the “exposed and defenseless pioneers” (Connelley 19, 18). The American settlers encroach on the Natives’ land and the consequences result in an
attack; thus, Connelley uses this fear from the white pioneers to frame the settlers as innocent, evidencing how his bias view bleeds over into his account of Wiley’s captivity. Although the white settlers display the same characteristics as the Native Americans in his narrative, he never acknowledges the similarities. His focus stays on Wiley and the treatment by the “savage tribe […] of barbarians” that take her captive (Connelley 19). His historical account, thus, emphasizes Wiley’s suffrage to unite readers against the Native Americans and to promote expansion of the settlements. “In Connelley’s hands, Jennie’s body becomes the vehicle for recounting a masculine history […] for the purpose of justifying expansion,” which works towards his agenda (Harrison 167).

In Connelley’s historical account of Jenny Wiley’s captivity, he portrays Wiley as a stereotypical, Colonial-American woman in order to underscore the need for patriarchal protection and validate the American frontiersman. Connelley focuses on her family and children for a majority of the back story, since he locates her identity as a wife and mother. He writes, “before her marriage she had killed bears, wolves, panthers, and other wild animals… [and] was at home in the woods” (Connelley 40). Connelley’s version does not show Wiley as a hunter or at home in the wilderness. Before the Native attack, Connelley shows her finishing a “piece of cloth, which would require but a few minutes,” and makes her “feed and care for the domestic animals” but feels “anxious to proceed as rapidly as possible” (Connelley 37). When the Natives attack, she becomes a woman that needs to be saved by the white American frontiersman. Her frail female gender script dictates her weakness and inability to fend for herself or her children. Her wild and free nature before her marriage shows how cultural gender roles domesticate women. Connelley’s narrative shows her actions as normal for a woman; therefore, showing the need for patriarchal protection from the Natives.

Gordon removes Connelley’s domestication of Jenny in her short story “The Captive” and, instead, shows her as an independent and head-strong individual in order to push female agency. Harrison says, “Gordon seeks to restore the silenced voice of the woman who drives the narrative” (162). The voice Gordon gives Wiley shows a significantly different character than Connelley’s narrative. Gordon’s text says, “[y]ou’re brash, Jinny,” which she repeatedly displays throughout the narrative (177). Gordon keeps Wiley’s pre-marriage “brashness” to overshadow the female gender stereotype. Instead of sowing cloth, Gordon’s Wiley “fastened up the stock… [and] stopped and milked her [cow]” before she decides to go to the neighbor’s house (Gordon 178). Here, she completes
from the beginning of the narrative, Gordon inflates Wiley’s personality to challenge gender codes set by the patriarchal society. She “refuse[s] to [write a] static text endorsing essential, unchanging identities and hence fixed social hierarchies of …gender” (Castiglia 4). As Boyle notes, she uses Wiley’s captivity to “criticize an existing order [and] imagine new orders” (80). Gordon does not show the servitude of a wife and mother, but reimagines a woman acting on her own instincts. Her narrative uses “its metaphoric potentiality to underscore the subversive actions of women [and] their strength and survival skills” (Harrison 169). By removing the gender scripts, Gordon’s narrative pushes for female agency to underscore the captivity women face in their own culture. Women that follow the gender script become patriarchal agents, which further diminish their own freedom and agency. Gordon’s Wiley, thus, orders her husband out of the house, soothes children so she can get work done, and confronts the Native chief for the mistake they made. By showing a dominant nature towards men and an indifferent nature towards her children, Gordon’s portrayal of Wiley blurs the lines between notions of how genders functions in society. She shows how gender codes do not always dictate identity.

Connelley’s historical account of Wiley’s captivity, especially the death of her children, highlights her maternity and her perpetual state of motherhood, which further supports his argument for westward expansion. In the original, the children have no names, but she watches as her “slain children and her brother [are] scalped before her eyes” (Connelley 38). These children belong to her, and she sees them as her identity. Connelley’s repetition of the word “children” constantly reminds the reader of Wiley’s role as a mother. The text says, “[…] she tried to save her children [but] […] only the youngest child remained alive of her children […] and she caught up this child and fought off the Indians” (Connelley 38). Her failed attempt to escape displays her weakness and dependence on patriarchal support. As a mother, her role as caregiver becomes evident as she easily follows suit to protect her last surviving child by willingly following her captors. In Connelley’s version, Wiley puts her child in constant danger by falling behind the group and expecting the Chief, her male authority figure, to save him. As a woman used to patriarchal protection, she depends on a man to keep her safe, even in captivity. Connelley makes Wiley’s attempt to run directly back to the white men following the Indian party an obvious mistake that causes her child’s death. Connelley says, “she fell behind the Indians…
[and] knew what he would do when he came back... and with her last strength ran back up its course with her child” (45). With no strength or protection of the white frontiersman, her possibility of escape seems hopeless. Her perpetual state of motherhood becomes her only identity, and with the destruction of that identity, her dependence on the white frontiersman for rescue becomes stronger. The eventual death of all five of her children and her willingness to go along as a captive exploit the gender scripted helpless nature of women and their need for patriarchal support and westward expansion in order to eradicate the threat.

Gordon’s revised, fictional narrative gives agency to Wiley through the loss of her children.1 While Gordon’s published story begins before the Natives arrive to kill her family and burn her house, her original draft started with the attack, the death of the children, and the destruction of the identity as mother for Wiley. Gordon states, “I started the story when the Indians came [...] and then she sees her fourteen-year-old son, sees an Indian tomahawk him, and she thinks, ‘Well I can’t get any more help from him’” (Baum 451). The suggestions of her editor lead her to follow the course of the original narrative to make the story less harsh. Gordon uses this to her advantage by creating separate identities for the children, instead of referring to them as a group. Gordon says Wiley, “found Martha, the littlest one...dead...and ...Sadie ...dead, too” (Gordon 178) and, later, Wiley “saw something dangling from his belt and ...knew it was the scalps of my children” (Gordon 179). By giving names to the children, Gordon does not highlight Wiley’s identity as mother via repetition like in the original narrative. Further, she removes the children from the narrative quickly, “draw[ing] attention away from Jennie’s role as caregiver and mother—in other words, her concern for external necessities—and focus[ing] on her internal or mental development as an individual” (Harrison 177). She shows the Native American destruction of her constructed female identity of motherhood through the death of her children. And, although Wiley’s youngest child remains alive at this point in the story, Gordon ultimately uses him to perpetuate female agency as opposed to tying her down to a restrictive gender script.

While Gordon’s narrative includes Wiley’s care of Dinny, “The Captive” underscores, not maternity, but her intelligence and strength to perpetuate female agency for Wiley. During her travels in captivity, Wiley says, “I made a sort of sling that I put around my shoulders to carry him in; and I made a cover, too...to keep the rain off his little face” (Gordon 183). Gordon recasts Wiley as a resourceful woman who
“subvert[s] white discourses of gender, in which white women were far less privileged than their white brothers” (Castiglia 7). Gordon’s Wiley makes a valid attempt to run and fight to protect Dinny when Mad Dog catches her. Gordon writes, “I turned and ran back up stream as fast as I could […] [but] I tried to run faster and I caught my foot in a root” (Gordon 185). Wiley attempts to get away several times and never presents doubts. Gordon fictionalizes Wiley to give her strength and intelligence as a counter to Connelley’s narrative, which only portrays her as helpless. Though Connelley’s Wiley watches her baby die, Gordon’s Wiley says, “I tried to push them out […] but he kicked me away [so] I got up and went at him again” (Gordon 185), which shows assertion of her dominant and fearless nature. Gordon also uses the child’s death as another contrasting point between the versions. Gordon displays Wiley’s defiance by saying, “I said no, I wouldn’t go, I would stay there with my baby; but he…drug me down the stream spite of all I could do” (Gordon 185). By resisting the male authoritative figure, Gordon’s Wiley displays her defiance in gender scripts which pushes for female agency. She not only destroys the last remaining thread that ties her to her role as mother, but her resourcefulness and independence resist the need for patriarchal protection. She can now create an identity separate from the constructed identity society attempts to place on her.

In Connelley’s version, he devotes significant space to Wiley’s pregnancy and childbirth while in captivity to reiterate her identity as mother, which perpetuates her need for male protection and westward expansion. After the death of her youngest, the text says, Wiley “became seriously ill, but she concealed her condition from the Indians as long as possible […] [but] it soon became impossible for her to proceed [and] there a son was born to her” (Connelley 49). Connelley does not mention her condition until the child’s birth, and presents maternity as a common occurrence since motherhood dominates a woman’s identity. The narrative underscores her role as perpetual mother here by giving her another child to care for, and again after her escape and rescue. To demonstrate the need for protection from the savage Natives that kill innocent children, the text says, “the Wyandot killed the child with his tomahawk and immediately proceeded to scalp it” (Connelley 50). As a woman, Wiley’s physical weakness prevents her from saving her child, but with expansion and protection from white frontiersman, the women and children would become safe. Connelley, thus, shows Wiley’s connection to her culturally constructed identity by constantly reminding the reader of her role as a mother. Having Wiley follow a constructed
Female Agency

identity shows her as weak, unintelligent, and dependent on protection. She continues to follow the cultural norms set by the patriarchal society, which demonstrates her dependence on her gender scripted identity.

Gordon’s story omits Wiley’s pregnancy and childbirth in captivity in “The Captive” to allow the character to explore freer roles outside of motherhood, which in turn gives support to women’s abilities to become more than their culturally constructed gender identity allows. Anne Boyle says Gordon “transforms the captivity narrative into a symbolic chronicle of maternal emancipation” by removing Wiley’s pregnancy and replacing roles that do not conform to gender scripts (79). In Gordon’s narrative, Wiley’s loyalty to the patriarchal society she leaves shifts after losing her last remaining child during. She begins to “[speak] to [them] in Shawnee” (Gordon 186) and then says, “[...] and I didn’t think any more about them coming after me [...] [and] that I’d never see a white face again” (Gordon 187). After losing her last child, as Boyle notes, Wiley “loses all vestiges of feminine timidity and follows a practical spirit that allows her to assert her own identity and value” (84). She abandons any thought of returning to Colonial American society; and, without a child to care for, Wiley’s work allows her time to meditate on her past life. At first the Natives make her “gather all the firewood” but eventually allow her to take a lead role and “smelt it out for bullets” (Gordon 190). This task gives her time to herself “sometimes [...] from sunup to sundown [...] [where] I would sit and think about my husband and my children [...] [and how] it was only that was gone away” (Gordon 190). Here, she shows her disconnect between her herself and her past. She no longer sees herself as part of the family she once had. She becomes accustomed to Natives American life and even says, “the old chief was like a father to me” and “he took great pains to show me how to flesh pelts and cure them, [and] split a deer sinew for thread and how to make a whistle to call deer” (Gordon 194). Her narrative shows how, “Jennie’s body becomes the archetype of female movement into new forms of bondage represented by her Indian captivity where she is given voice, agency, and even the space to have creative vision” (Harrison 167). She learns new trades as a member of the group and not as an outsider. Without her ties to white society, the Native Americans view her as one of them. The freedom presented in Gordon’s version “gives Jennie agency [...] while revealing how limited [...] the acquisition of agency is in a society that limits and restricts [...] the roles of women” (Harrison 167). Wiley lives for herself instead of others that society forces her to
As a woman who wants to work, this appeals to Gordon who “felt [personally] trapped by the maternal […] and by the fear that her nurturing of others interfered with her literary creation” (Boyle 68). She uses Wiley’s fictional character to underscore the maternal gender role as stereotypical, which shows how motherhood does not dominate a woman’s identity. Gordon accomplishes Wiley’s freedom, thus, by omitting Jenny’s historically documented pregnancy and childbirth among the natives as a release from the captive nature of motherhood.

As a typical captivity narrative and historical account, Connelley shows Wiley as a complacent laboring captive which coincides with her constructed female identity. Connelley says, “they sometimes required Mrs. Wiley to follow them and bring in the game they killed […] [and] was made to carry the ore […] [and] made to plant corn” (Connelley 57-58). Connelley’s diction shows how the Natives forced her to work to show the savagery of her captives. She seems to do nothing all day while she works other than think of her work. Wiley also “smelt[s] [lead] out to be used for bullets for the guns” (Connelley 58). Connelley shows her work as just a matter of fact. She seems to have no preference in her work and merely does what her authority figure tells her to. Wiley’s culturally constructed identity shines here as she methodically does the bidding of an authoritative man. She does not complain about her situation or contemplate the usefulness of the trades the Natives teach her or the fact that she could never learn them in a patriarchal society. Her meekness as a woman keeps her in the place the patriarchal society set for her. Further, the slave-like treatment of Wiley portrays the Natives as savage for forcing a weak woman to labor all day, further supporting his argument for westward expansion.

In Gordon’s story, Wiley embraces her freedom away from the confines of Colonial American society by removing the restrictive gender codes placed on her. Gordon’s Wiley shows optimism towards the work the Natives expect of her and uses the time Wiley spends alone working to interject memories of a culture she no longer belongs to. The memories demonstrate Wiley’s strength and intelligence. As she smelts the lead, she thinks of Lance Rayburn and his attempted rape of her. In her memory, she asks Rayburn as he attacks her, “What you reckon my pappy’ll say […],” which has no effect on him (Gordon 191). He only stops the attempt to violate her when she says, “I ain’t gonna have none of you no matter what” (Gordon 191). The memory shows how her attempted rapist only becomes intimidated by her loathing for him rather than the threat made using her father. The fact that she fights off
a rapist with just her words shows the strength a woman can possess. Gordon's use of fiction allows her to create a strong female character whose voice challenges violent gender roles here. Additionally, the memory of Vard Wiley mocks gender appropriate behavior and the blaming of women for men's actions. As the schoolmaster swims naked in the creek, Vard sits on the bank dressed as a woman. The schoolmaster begins degrading the supposed woman saying, “You hussy! You brazen hussy!” and she “ought to be run out of the settlements” (Gordon 194). The patriarchal society places the blame on the woman for viewing the naked man, instead of on the man actually swimming naked. Her comical inversion of gender—the woman is really Vard in disguise—serves to make visible this double standard, which Jenny herself recognizes. Gordon's text says, “I would laugh all by myself there in the woods. Throw back my head and laugh and then feel silly when the woods give back the echo” (194). The echo from the woods multiplies her reaction to the scene and false restrictions set by society. The placement of these memories of gender inequality during her captivity contrasts the freedom of self she experiences in the wilderness with the Natives to the captivity environment of her home culture.

In Connelley's historical account, Wiley’s encounter with the white captive boy and the resulting death threat shows her as a submissive woman in need of rescue by the white frontiersman. Wiley watches as the Cherokee chief brings in a young white man as a prisoner. As a woman and an outsider, “she [is] not permitted to come near enough to him to have any conversation” and said nothing, even though she knows they intend to torture and kill him (Connelley 59). The narrative shows her need to not be noticed as instructed by gender scripts. She then begins following orders to cook for the warriors. As the Natives excitement increases, they begin “threatening to kill her, and for the first time the Shawnee chief did not stand her friend” (Connelley 60). Connelley casts a woman who shows fear as the excited Natives threaten her safety and looks to the only male authority figure left in her life. As the Natives tie her to a tree for burning, “as no prospect of escape came to her [...] she [is] the more easily reconciled to death” (Connelley 61). Her submission to the Natives wishes to kill her ends up saving her life, as the Cherokee chief finds value in a submissive woman. Her submission not only shows her identity entrenched in gender scripts, it also tells women that submission could be beneficial. She then reconciles herself as property to him and never resists. Connelley shows her as a weak captive woman in need of rescuing by the white man.
In Gordon’s narrative, Wiley shows her brash nature by asserting her dominance over the captive white boy, which promotes female agency while challenging patriarchal set gender scripts. As the captive boy walks by her, Wiley says, “I can’t do nothing […] I’m a white woman, but I can’t do nothing, Christ” (Gordon 196). Even though she speaks to the captive, she still speaks to a white dominant male. She shows her rejection of the culturally constructed gender scripts by the words she speaks and the person she speaks them to. Although he dies, the connection she makes with him eventually leads her home. After leaving the boy, she approaches Mad Dog and says, “A present for Kagahyeliske’s daughter. Give me this boy” (Gordon 196). Her brash nature shown through the demand given to Mad Dog revises gender scripts and shows her as dominant and independent. She does not ask for the boy; she demands him. Gordon gives worth to Wiley’s character through her brash nature. After she displays dominance, Mad Dog says, “[Jinny […] pretty Jinny”(Gordon 196), which shows that he “recognizes her resourcefulness, ability to adapt, and her brashness, which attracts his affections” (Harrison 191). Her dominant nature causes Mad Dog to purchase her as his wife instead of as a slave. Gordon uses marriage instead of slavery to challenge gender scripts set by the patriarchal society. Wiley resists the marriage saying, “do not give me to this man […] you have promised to take me with you wherever you go” (Gordon 198). Her dominant nature does not allow her to submit to gender scripts; therefore, she fights for freedom and dignity. She refuses to merely submit to captivity by any man, even the man that gave her freedom in the wilderness to begin with.

In Connelley’s account, Wiley’s eventual rescue commences at the hands of the dead white man, which reiterates her need for patriarchal protection. After the exchange with the Cherokee chief, Wiley’s dream presents her with an escape plan. The tortured white man held his lantern up and “[t]here stood a fort erected by white men” (Connelley 71). Her dream ends there, and she makes her way to the fort as the white man instructed. Connelley says, “[s]he was anxious to return to her husband and relatives” after her escape from the Native Americans (76). When she reaches the fort, Henry Scaggs, an older white man, constructs a raft in order to help Wiley across the river save her. The old man carries out the rescue, again showing Wiley’s weakness as a woman who needs an old man to save her from the Natives. As she enters the fort, the Cherokee chief yells, “honor, Jennie, honor” which she does not respond to (Connelley 75). The chief’s questioning of Wiley’s honor to
leave him as his property shows the barbaric nature Connelley wants to portray. Her refusal shows her need to return to the protection of the white men. At this point, she owes nothing to the Cherokee chief since the safety of the fort and white men protects her from harm.

Wiley’s dream in Gordon’s story shows her the escape route as well; however, the dream also presents her with a vision of the restrictive society she plans to return to. As she follows the dead white boy, he brings her to her “house and yet it [is]n’t” (Gordon 200). The house appears “[w]hite all over…[with] no log[s] at all, but bleached bone… the floor and the walls and the chimney” (Gordon 200). The replacement of logs with bone symbolizes the savageness of white Colonial Americans. The “bleached bone” references the removal of flesh and the drying effects of the sun. This shows how Colonial American society has stripped away Wiley’s and any other woman’s identity and left them naked and helpless. Any resistance to the cultural norms set by the patriarchal society would leave the woman a “hussy.” Only white men inhabit her cabin in the dream, but they quickly turn into Native Americans and, finally, Mad Dog and the Shawnee chief. The transformation from white man to Native American merges the civil and savage. The white men become savage while the Natives are compared to civilized society. As she runs, the Shawnee chief says, “[t]he white people are all over the land. The beaver makes no more dams and the buffalo does not come to the lick. And bees swarm here in the ancient village. Bees swarm on the graves of our fathers” (Gordon 201). The Shawnee chief explains how the civil white man comes and destroys natural life and strips the land from the Native peoples. The Shawnee chief’s words show the white man as a savage and the Native as civil. After these images, the white boy shows Wiley the fort she will escape to as her fear of becoming Mad Dog’s wife drives her to leave the Natives.

Wiley’s escape in Gordon’s narrative further displays the courage, intelligence, and resourcefulness Wiley possesses. During her escape, she says, “I wished I could stay there where the cedar boughs were like a little house,” which evidences her reluctance to return to society even at the price of her life (Gordon 204). She says the Natives “were more likely to take me up on the barren and burn me like they done that boy,” but she “wished [she] could stay there and not run any more” (Gordon 202, 204). After losing the meat she took from the Natives, she “come[s] on some forward wild greens…[and] put[s] [her] greens on to boil” (Gordon 206). The resourcefulness Gordon gives her allows her to escape the Natives and survive in the wilderness. Once she finds
the fort, the courage and intelligence she displays to get across the river when her rescuer shows his uselessness allows her to display a non-conforming gender role. When escape seemed impossible, “[t]he old man fell down on his knees and started praying,” which shows weakness and a dependence on someone else. Gordon does not allow Wiley to display stereotypical gender qualities. Wiley says, “Go on and pray, you old fool...I’m a-going to git across this river” (Gordon 209). She shows her strength and her ability as a woman to perform a man’s task. Even though the old man stands as the protection for the fort, Gordon uses his weakness to show the flaws of patriarchal protection for women.

As they enter the fort, Mad Dog yells, “Whoopee! [...] whoopee! [...] pretty Jinny,” which comments on her ability as a non-conforming woman. Gordon’s version does not bring Wiley’s honor into question as the original narrative does, which further illustrates the construction of gender identity through the patriarchal society. Wiley’s capabilities as a captive of Natives, who escaped by her own means, shows how a woman’s identity and roles do not follow a certain gender code.

In Gordon’s narrative, Wiley’s reluctance to return to society becomes apparent and reminds readers of the freedom she experiences as a captive of the “barbaric” Natives. Wiley says, “I was lucky to git away from them Indians,” but says nothing about her desire to return to her husband and former life. The images and sounds of nature disappear as she enters the gate, and nothing except man-made objects surround her. She says, “I heard the bolt shoot home and I knew I was inside the fort” (Gordon 209). Her body resides in a literal fort as well as in a figurative fort. The “bolt [that] shoot[s] home” symbolizes a metal object being shoved into her heart or soul. As the gates close, her unique identity disappears as society forces her back into a female mold. She says, “[t]he Indians were still yelling. I sat up and the high stockade fence was all around me” (Gordon 209). The Indians yelling could signify their disappointment in Wiley’s decision to return to her captive society. The walls surrounding symbolize her imprisonment as she returns. After her release from captivity by the Natives, Wiley’s “captivity is merely exchanged for the old which results not only in domestic bondage but silence” (Harrison 167). Gordon, thus, chooses to end her story before Jenny returns to her husband to exclude the return to societal norms that Connelley’s historical account shows. Although the children tragically die, Gordon does not force Wiley back into motherhood as culture dictates. Gordon removes the culturally constructed characteristics to show the possibilities of a womanhood not limited by gender scripts. By removing
the stereotypical material Connelley focuses on, she attempts to “revise gender scripts and increase women’s social mobility” (Castiglia 5). As she asserts a more realistic view of a woman, she also removes the stereotypical constructs, such as motherhood, servitude, and acceptance of male authority. As many women that survive a captivity, Wiley chooses to return to relate her story. Castiglia says, “Captive white women have shown, however, that while they are never free, they have nevertheless developed voices with which to denaturalize and revise their home cultures’ scripts of identity” (11-12). Gordon’s narrative works to change the ways in which society views women and to show the restrictions of patriarchal constructs and gender scripts.

Gordon rewrites Connelley’s historical account of the captivity of Jenny Wiley to underscore gender scripts that force women into submission to the patriarchal society. Connelley’s narrative works to promote westward expansion by presenting Wiley as a weak, societal driven woman who depends on the protection of the patriarch. By presenting Wiley as a strong, independent woman, free from the culturally constructed identity of mother, Gordon allows Wiley to experience freedom usually only afforded to men in her culture. She uses the binaries between civil and savage to compare the white Americans to the Native Americans, therefore, showing the savage white man and the civil Native man. This binary shows the savage tendencies of the patriarchal society that she comes from by comparing them to the Natives culture, and to the freedom of body and mind she experiences in the wilderness with her captives.

NOTES

1. Although Gordon did not lose any children, poverty forced her to “leave their infant daughter, Nancy, […] in the care of the elder Gordons […]”, while she and her husband attempted to make a living (Wood xiii). She could not care for her child without money and would not have been able to work if Nancy had stayed with them. Her choice to leave her daughter to pursue her own goals becomes apparent in her rewrite of the narrative.

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CAPTIVITY IN OTHER CONTEXTS
“The body, rather than being an object that represents or defines what we understand as identity, subjectivity, or consciousness, instead serves as contested ground for the playing out of various performative possibilities.

—Tina Chen

Traditional captivity narratives of early America began in the late 1600s. The non-fiction stories became widely popular after the publication of the tales of Mary Rowlandson, Hannah Dustan, and Mary Jemison. Mary Jemison's story was first published in 1823 after she told her story to James Seaver, 68 years after her initial capture by the Seneca Native Americans. Her story varied from the others like hers because she was taken by Native Americans for a purpose other than money or revenge. She had value to them in the form of family. Mary was taken with the hope that she could successfully transition into a permanent life as a Native American. Most importantly, the Native Americans gained a valuable asset, one that could help the tribe grow and thrive. At the very same time during the 1600s, Japan experienced a cultural shift among their women into a world of male entertainment. Starting out as prostitution houses, or pleasure quarters, female entertainers fought for clients by learning new
skills in dancing, instruments, and singing (Feldman 223-224). Expectations rose and higher standards were set for women by their male clientele and other women alike; above all else they were entertainers and performers. From these true stories comes the fictional tale of Chiyo Sakamoto in Arthur Golden's 1998 novel, *Memoirs of a Geisha*. Chiyo's father sells her to the geisha districts of Kyoto, Japan. The head of the okiya buys her with the intention of using her as an investment in their livelihood. Much like Jemison, Chiyo is abruptly removed from her home and forced to adapt and assimilate to a new life. Both girls must learn the ways of their captors and successfully perform their new roles. Whether discussing Mary Jemison or Chiyo Sakamoto, both literal female bodies become the key to their survival in the new cultures. The captors physically alter the bodies of both Mary and Chiyo for their own gain. As scholar Tina Chen suggests above, the female body assumes the role of actor in a performance of the captive's new culture. The body becomes the “other” or savage, even to the owner of the body. Here lies the conflict for Mary and Chiyo; they no longer have ownership of their bodies once taken captive. The act of losing ownership of one's body, places the female's body as “other” to her—she forever remains in a liminal state until ownership returns; the authentic identity disappears during liminality. To regain some form of control, the female captive then adopts a performative body; this new body will mirror the culture around her, mask reminders of her old life that may displease the captors, and return agency to the female. Through the performance of their new roles and fabricated assimilation to the new cultures, Chiyo and Mary regain mobility and control of their bodies allowing them to maintain the ability to define the liminal space to which they exist; once they define the liminal space, they can choose to return to the former, or embrace the new.

Once removed from the civil community, Jemison and Chiyo exist completely in a liminal state, constantly struggling to assume a permanent identity. Critics Hein Viljoen and Chris van der Merwe define a liminal state as “the disintegration of the conventional structure and process of inner transformation and rebirth leading to a new sense of community.” Chiyo and Mary exist in this in-between state because the conventional and civil structure of community they once knew was threatened by a new savage community. Mary struggles between her former civil, colonial life and her Seneca family; Chiyo yearns for the small home she knew as a child as she fights her growing desire to become a successful geisha. Both long for the life they once knew, yet they are
drawn to their new cultures—whether its survival instincts or a genuine fascination. As scholar Marvin Carlson suggests, “performances [are] liminal activities, opposing the structure of normal cultural operations” (Carlson 68); Mary and Chiyo fight against the cultures of the savage through performance. As the two girls step into this liminal space, the longer they exist there, the more they repress their own identity and lack an authentic sense of self. At which point, they have no choice but to give in to the influences of the savage, foreign culture to authenticate a new identity. Although the new identities remain mere performances, both girls eventually assimilate to the new lives given to them; they transform into agents of their own bodies and identities. Chiyo and Mary decide on their own which path they will continue on: the civil past or the savage future. Both the geisha and the Native American communities acquire Chiyo and Mary at a young age respectively as if they are property for personal use. Mary and Chiyo experience the economic exchange of their bodies for the betterment of the seller and buyer. It was common practice for Native Americans to capture young women because they remained more susceptible to changes in their normal routine. Likewise, a girl must begin her training early so that she becomes a full geisha when it is most profitable for her and the okiya. The longer they girls stay, the more they hide the memory of their former life and adapt to their new one. To define the liminal state, to which they live for most of their life, the girls must change their birth name, alter their looks, and train in the activities of their new culture. In other words, to find their identities and self-worth, Jemison and Chiyo must adopt a malleable, performative role—an authentic performance of the savage other.

Performativity requires that the actor assume a dual identity; the difference between a performance and real life rests with the idea that the actor is malleable and able to switch between the authentic and performative roles. Mary and Chiyo learn quickly while with their new communities that the authentic must be removed in order to accommodate the performative. For both Mary and Chiyo, the removal of the civil, starts with the family. Traditional captivity narratives begin with a Native American attack wherein property is destroyed, settlers are killed, and others are taken captive. The tale of Mary Jemison is no different. In Mary’s final moments with her mother, her mother says, “My dear little Mary, I fear that the time has arrived when we must be parted forever….. Alas, my dear! my heart bleeds at the thoughts of what awaits you; but, if you leave us, remember my child your own name, and the name of your father and mother…. don’t try to escape; for if you do they will
find and destroy you” (Seaver 136). Mary’s mother desperately tries to console her child and offer any last minute advice she can because she knows she will not survive the Native American attacks. She also wishes for Mary to never forget her name and her civil, white upbringing. As later revealed in Mary’s story, she never escapes the Native Americans. In fact, she fully assimilates to their culture; yet, per her mother’s pleads, Mary never forgets her birth name. She assume a dual identity as both a Seneca woman and colonial lady. She learns during her early moments with the Seneca tribe that she must repress the memories of home in order to open her mind to the thought of assimilating into a new life. Performing her new role as sister to two Seneca women remains her only means of survival.

Maintaining a dual identity proves impossible when the savage community insists upon severing all ties to the authentic in order to control the assimilation process. Chiyo performs the role of daughter and sister to the best of her abilities in order to survive in her new home. Right before Chiyo and her sister, Satsu, were sold to the geisha district of Kyoto, Chiyo spends time with her mother. Similar to Mary’s mother, Chiyo’s mother faces an inevitable death. Unfortunately for Chiyo, her mother is too weak to provide any last words of comfort, and as Chiyo is sold by her father, she “heard her mother cry out in her sleep from the back room” (Golden 31). Chiyo attempts to envision her mother before she fell ill in the hopes of finding the strength to move away to Kyoto. Both stories establish a strong birth family to add importance to the family of the other. Allowing the reader to compare families before and during captivity offers a glimpse into the liminal space in which the girls are abruptly placed. The captors understand the importance of cutting all ties before the captive and her former life. So to solidify her place of liminality, the Native Americans kill and scalp Mary’s entire family, and Chiyo is not only sold by her father but also further separated from her sister upon entering Kyoto. A greater importance of family emerges because the families act as audiences. All performances have an audience. In these two stories, the audiences are the other—the Native Americans and the residents of the okiya. The okiya adopts Chiyo as their own until she pays off her debts or proves her worth. The Native Americans take Mary so that she may replace one of their fallen loved ones. Establishing a familial scene in which the girls are taken during a time of physical and emotional vulnerability, lends itself to widen the gap between cultures; this distance provides a clear liminal space to the reader. Additionally, the importance placed on familial bonds and com-
community allows our protagonists, whether consciously aware or not, to gain a feeling of security. Although unknown to them at the time, they have begun the audition process leading up to their acceptance into the new communities.

With all family lost and a sense of self broken, Jemison and Chiyo must redefine their authentic identities in order to survive their performative assimilations. Both girls change their outer appearances to match their new surroundings, which leads the captors to believe that the girls will forget their former lives and assume the new culture. Mary’s initiation begins with a bodily cleansing; “They first undressed me and threw my rags into the river; then washed me clean and dressed me in the new suit they had just brought, in complete Indian style; and then led me home and seated me in the center of their wigwam” (Seaver 142). Jemison is acted upon; the captors force the outer, surface level markings of their culture on her demarcating the beginnings of this performative acculturation. Jemison loses power over her outward identity as soon as the Native Americans take her. Similarly, the geishas of the okiya subject Chiyo to a cleansing; “Auntie only poured water over my shoulders and rubbed me down with a rag. Afterward she gave me a robe… more elegant than anything I’d ever worn before” (Golden 40). Auntie cleanses Chiyo of her former life and places her more firmly in her new one. In addition, Auntie establishes the okiya and its belongings as better than what Chiyo knows most comfortably. Mary and Chiyo experience a new maternal security; their new families wash them and clothe them as they were their own blood. The captors attempt to force this acculturation upon the captives in order to claim them as their own, by first weakening old familial bonds and creating a dependency on the new one.

To maintain control on to their authentic identities and to further their dual performativity, Mary and Chiyo allow themselves to be represented by a new name—another surface level caricature. Their names represent the last bit of authentic identity they own. For Jemison, the task remains simple; she only needs to fit the mold of a new sister for the two Seneca women she came to be adopted by; “In the course of that ceremony…they seemed to rejoice over me as over a long lost child. I was made welcome amongst them as a sister…and was called Dick-ewamis;…That is the name by which I have ever since been called by the Indians” (Seaver 143). Mary’s new name translates to means, “two falling voices.” The Seneca personally and permanently establish Mary as a girl with two names, two lives, two meanings. Mary did not have a choice when cast into her new identity; the Seneca immediately place
her as their own. Chiyo, however, earns her name in her own time. She retains her birth name for many years until she proves herself worthy enough for a geisha name. Chiyo earns her new name when a retired geisha, Mameha, adopts her as her sister; “The ceremony lasted only about ten minutes. From that moment on, I was no longer known as Chiyo. I was the novice geisha Sayuri” (Golden 167). Chiyo passes her audition and impressed Mameha so much that she will now mentor the novice geisha. Chiyo receives the stage name she will perform under. But this choice to prove her worth rests with her. Chiyo could have stayed a maid at the okiya for a long time and kept her old identity, but she chooses otherwise. Chiyo grows to accept the life of her captors and even begins to admire the respect and attention the geisha receive. Initially, both Mary and Chiyo feel uneasy when given their new identities; “I thought Sayuri was a lovely name, but it felt strange not to be known as Chiyo any longer….It was as if the little girl named Chiyo no longer existed. It felt as if this new girl, Sayuri, had destroyed her” (Golden 167). Even though Chiyo feels this way, it was still her decision to allow for the removal of her authentic identity. This removal allows space for a performative role, as well as a potential new authentic identity. Similarly for Jemison, “During my adoption, I sat motionless, nearly terrified to death at the appearance and actions of the company, expecting every moment to feel their vengeance, and suffer death on the spot” (Seaver 144). Both girls feel a part of them leaving, almost abandoning them. However, now they have new names fit for any person worthy of their new community. While in a liminal state, the captors reestablish a part of their captive’s identity that places them closer to their new community. And yet, the Mary and Chiyo regain mobility upon the recognition of their dual identity by the other. Once again, however, the girls do not choose their own name; it is forced upon them once they accept the role for which they unintentionally auditioned.

Once introduced into their new lives, both captors surround the girls with a large matriarchy to ensure a strong female voice influences their lives and their regained agency so that Mary and Chiyo will one day lead future generations as patriarchal agents. While the ultimate opinion of value lies with the male suitors during these exchanges of economic performances—Chiyo’s geisha meetings and Mary’s marriages—the responsibility of teaching and raising these young girls lies with the maternal figures. The higher ranked women in each community set up a precedent and level of expectation for the young girls in order to acculturate them permanently; once acculturated and invested in the new culture, the
girls continue to perpetuate the social, economic, and familial cycles within each community. By capturing, training, and accepting Mary and Chiyo, the matriarch invests in their own livelihood and survival. When comparing both stories, however, the reader witnesses two very different interactions between captive and captor. Mary’s initial interactions with the Native Americans ingrained fear, pain, heartbreak, and violence as synonymous with their way of life. The Native Americans kill her family, and they sell her to other tribes. Once they stop trading Mary between families, her interactions with them immediately flips. She arrives to her new camp as a guest over whom they dance and sing; “Their tears flowed freely, and they exhibited all the signs of real mourning…. In the course of that ceremony, from mourning they became serene—joy sparkled in their countenances, and they rejoice…. I afterwards learned that the ceremony I at that time passed through, was that of adoption” (Seaver 143). She witnessed their pain and could actually relate, never mind the fact that they are the ones that cause her pain. The Native Americans rejoice over their new family member and instantly accept her as their own. This receptiveness stems from the matriarchal nature of the community as a whole and the small matriarchy by which she was adopted. Jemison states, “They seemed to rejoice over me as over a long-lost child. I was made welcome amongst them as a sister” (Seaver 143). Jemison’s capture exists because the Seneca tribe that took her needed to replace a fallen family member. Familial and matriarchal ties prove so important that, so long as a body fills the spot, they are confident that they can teach, dress, and love it accordingly.

Chiyo’s authentic identity creates animosity from her captors as it stands as a constant reminder of her former, civil life. The fast-paced love and acceptance that Jemison experienced did not transfer over for Chiyo, even though her new community thrived under a matriarchy. Upon the first economic exchange of her body, Chiyo is bought and sold by a close family friend. Eventually Chiyo stops being traded and sold when she ends up in the okiya. After she was separated from her sister, Chiyo “slumped down in tears. The older women must have taken pity on me; for a long while I lay there sobbing without anyone touching me….At length, she helped me to my feet and dried my face with her grey kimono, [and said to me], ‘Now little girl, there’s no need to worry’” (Golden 37-38). This kindness did not last long as the head of the okiya, and those afraid to defy the matriarch, treated Chiyo with cruelty. Any coldness Chiyo felt in the beginning stemmed from the matriarch being more business oriented than family oriented. Even if
her guardians were called “Auntie” and “Mother” by everyone at the okiya, it was simply a title given to place those women at the top of the household. The difference Chiyo feels in relation to Jemison also comes from the fact that Chiyo did not reside on the same level as her adoptive family. Chiyo acted as daughter and niece, where Jemison acted as sister. Sisters communicate on the same level; mothers and aunts are always above the daughters, mentally and physically. Chiyo will always have to fight for her place in the okiya. Mother views her as potential income and, eventually, as successor to the house and business. The matriarchs of the okiyas of Gion exist to retain power over the female body as a means to thrive economically. Only once a girl proves her value and monetary worth to a male client, does she gain substance and responsibilities from her female leader.

In order for Mary and Chiyo to maintain some form of an authentic identity their audiences must be distracted of all outside disruptions in order to fully engage in the show. In other words, there must be no trace of the former, civil life on the captives in order for the captors to appreciate the new role given to the performer. Mary and Chiyo have the look and have a new name, now they must literally act the part of a member of their communities. The captors force Mary and Chiyo to learn and participate in the customs of their culture which repress the memories of their past lives more expediently. For a geisha, there are four stages of training to be successful in her performance of acculturation. As soon as Chiyo enters the okiya, she begins the first stage, which places her as low as a maid. She learns nothing of the practices of a geisha aside from small glimpse she may catch. After Chiyo proves herself worthy of staying and worthy of the life of a geisha—not only to her okā-san but to herself as well—may she progress. As soon as Chiyo admits to herself that she wants to become a profitable geisha and give her name worth, she starts to actively assimilate into the culture of the okiya. Upon this revelation, she enters stage two. She begins lessons in the shamisen, fan dancing, tea serving, walking, dress, and etiquette. Chiyo fully immerses herself into learning everything there is to know about her new life. At this moment, it’s her choice to stay as a captive to her okā-san, the debt she owes, and the okiya. Because performance exists as acculturation, Chiyo prepares and practices her role in this new, life-long performance. While the memory of her former life is repressed, Chiyo actively wishes to be a proper representative of her new culture.

Similar to Chiyo, Mary performs the actions and customs of the Seneca tribe in order to maintain her authentic agency while living with
them. One must rehearse in order to put on a passable performance. Immediately following her adoption, Mary “was employed in nursing the children, and doing light work about the house. Occasionally [she] was sent out with the Indian hunters, when they went but a short distance, to help them carry their game. [Her] situation was easy; [she] had no particular hardships to endure.” When speaking of her new family, Mary states, “My sisters were diligent in teaching me their language; and to their great satisfaction I soon learned so that I could understand it readily, and speak it fluently. I was very fortunate in falling into their hands; for they were kind good natured women” (Seaver 144). Mary highly regarded her Native American family; she saw the good in them and wished to please them. Mary shifts from scared captive to a content family member, whom actively attempts to acculturate to the new life forced upon her. In contrast to Mary, Chiyo agrees to perform as assimilated in order to benefit her own gain. Chiyo wishes to perform well in order to become the most famous geisha in all of Gion; she wants to become more powerful than all the other girl and women who were mean to her. Beating them at their own game brings Chiyo the motivation she needs to push through the pain of the loss she experienced. Chiyo regains her agency when she set a goal for herself and situates herself for success.

The longer Mary and Chiyo live with the othered community, the more their authentic identity falters. Both girls come to realize they obtain more agency over themselves when they adopt the ways of their new cultures, and, as their stories will reveal, both girl wish to stay among their captors; they want to live as they do and reach their fullest potential as a member of the savage groups. To accept their new roles within the community, Jemison and Chiyo must once again revisit the topic of outward appearance. The more they accept their new family and life, the more they allow themselves to change on the surface. The girls allow their captors to change them into the traditional clothing of the Seneca and geisha, style their hair in the proper color and fashion, and most importantly, paint their faces when appropriate. For Jemison, she wore face paint as a Seneca during ceremonies, times of war, and during rituals; “At the place where we halted, the Indians combed the hair of the young man, the boy and myself, and then painted our faces and hair red, in the finest Indian style” (Seaver 140). Likewise, Chiyo wore traditional makeup, before her ceremonies, gatherings, and rituals. Both women amplified the performance of assimilation when they put on the mask of their new communities. One similarity however, remains with the fact that these makeups and outfits were place onto the
girl by their captors, they did not choose to do so themselves, at least not in the beginning. At first the captors forces the girls to appear as if they belong, painting their faces, styling their hair, and providing the proper attire. Eventually, however, these new markers became a part of their performance of assimilation and they began to perform such tasks by themselves. Through assimilation, Mary and Chiyo regain agency and mobility to assume the appearance they wish to. They decide where they wish to fit in and whom they hope to please. All former traits they knew of themselves or that anyone could identify were covered up by the identifiers of their new communities. From head to toe, they appeared to be fully assimilated.

In traditional captivity narratives one attribute of the female captive always sticks out and places them back in their former life—their eyes. Focusing on the captive’s eyes call the reader’s attention back to the liminality of the girls’ circumstances and their dual identity. Eyes are the one physical trait that is impossible to change. From the very beginning of the novel, the importance of Chiyo’s eyes plays a large role in her identity; “My mother said it was because we were made just the same…we both had the same peculiar eyes of the sort you almost never see in Japan. Instead of being dark brown like everyone else’s, [our] eyes were a translucent gray” (Golden 9). The beauty of her eyes allows her to stand out among the other geishas when competing for rank and suitors. One part of her old life and family never left her. Assimilation does not change where the person came from; it simply changes where they are going. As with Mary Jemison, “her eyes are blue…and naturally brilliant and sparkling….When she looks up and is engaged in conversation her countenance is very expressive; but from her long residence with the Indians, she has acquired the habit of peeping from under eye-brows as they do with the head inclined downwards” (Seaver 127). Mary knows her eyes stand out, so as a means to conceal her former self, she adopts the mannerisms of the Seneca. The past life of a captive never completely disappears. The reader is privy to this notion throughout the novels when the authors refer back to their unique eyes frequently. In some instances, attention to eyes offers reminders into the lives the girls once led. Chiyo states about Mother, “I was so curious about her that my eyes took on a life of their own and began to dart about. The more I saw of her, the more fascinated I became. The more I looked at her clothing, the less I was aware of standing there in that dirt corridor, or of wondering what had become of my [family] and what would become of me.” Chiyo’s eyes guided her to see the life around her, allowing her to forget the
painful memories of home. Although told not to, Chiyo looks into Mother’s eyes with an innocent confidence. She subconsciously knows, that no matter what they put her through or what she does to perform her assimilation, they can never change who she was, where she is from, and who her parents were.

Through performance Mary and Chiyo regain mobility and control of their bodies, allowing them to maintain the ability to define the liminal space in which they reside. Both Mary and Chiyo perform in their liminal spaces for decades each. However, eventually their stories will differ. Mary performs the mannerisms, appearances, and culture of the Seneca tribe until eventually, she is no longer performing. Mary grows to accept her performance as her new authentic identity. She embraces the life of her captives and identifies as one of them. The fact that she retells her story to a white amateur historian maintains the notion that she remembers her former life quite clearly. As the Seneca label her early on, Dickewamis will always have a dual identity. Mary’s performance of the savage other allowed her to regain agency over her body. This agency empowered Mary to choose her identity. She chose to stay with the Seneca; however, she never forgot her former life. Critic Judith Butler claims it is “wrong to assume that there is a category of women that simply needs to be filled in with various components of race, class, ethnicity…in order to become complete” (Gender Trouble, Chapter 3). Chiyo does not wish to fill a mold placed upon her; therefore, she only ever performed her new role as geisha. She grew to appreciate the history and respect that came with such a title; however she never wished to remain associated with such a culture; she chose to never fully assimilate. Chiyo’s performance gave her the agency she needed in order to choose the path she desired. Once they opportunity presented itself, Chiyo left the geisha life behind her, and she moved away to live with the man she loved. While some may argue that Chiyo moved from one performance to another, geisha to wife, the fact still remains that she chose the next phase in her life; her life as a geisha was forced upon her and in turn forced her performance. Both Chiyo and Mary gained the agency and mobility they needed to rid themselves of the liminal space in which they lived for so many years.

Full acculturation remains a slow process, one which took our protagonists decades to accomplish. Upon realizing the self-worth and strengths they gained while living among their new communities, Mary and Chiyo learn of their new agency over their own bodies and lives. The matriarchal circle, which takes on a patriarchal countenance that both girls live
under, suggests gender in and of itself is malleable; as critic and feminist theory scholar Judith Butler states, “Gender cannot be understood as a role which either expresses or disguises an interior ‘self.’ As performance is performative, gender is an ‘act,’ broadly constructed from the social fiction of its own psychological interiority….Genders can be neither true nor false….and yet one is made to comply with a model of truth and falsity which…contradicts its own performative fluidity” (Butler 528). Gender and gender roles are performative. The captors not only force the girls to perform a new culture, but also to perform a new feminine role different than the one they already knew. Going from a white colonist daughter to a Seneca sister and wife, or moving from a poor village with a focus on manual labor to a district of “proper” etiquette lends itself to provide multiple liminal and malleable states for the two girls live. The only way to add context, meaning, and forward mobility to Mary and Chiyo’s liminal space exists in performance. Intentionally at first, and willingly later in life, the girls learn and grow in the cultures in which their captors place them. They successfully perform the gender roles expected of them as a means of survival at first and desire later. Entering a performative state allows for easy repression of any memories of a former life, and eases into a state of genuine desire to retain residence among the culture of the “other” leading to full acculturation.

NOTES
1. From Tina Chen’s Double Agency, 93-94.
2 Geisha literally translates to “arts person.” They were admired for their beauty as well as their artistic talents.
3 Okiya is a Japanese term for the boarding house in which geisha, in-training and professional, reside. Only women live here.
4 A liminal state, or liminality, refers to the transitional period of time between the former, well known constant, and a new, foreign constant. The participants move back and forth between old identities and new.
5 In Kyoto, Satsu is sold to a different okiya than Chiyo. They will never meet again until many years later when Chiyo is informed about her sister’s survival.

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Marie Leprince de Beaumont’s original *Beauty and the Beast* plot mirrors the traditional captivity narrative until the story’s conclusion. Belle, the protagonist, works as a housemaid while her family squanders their fortune. When her father leaves to settle his affairs in town, Belle requests a rose as a gift. The father stumbles onto a castle in the woods where he finds a garden, but the angered Beast appears when the father clips a rose. The Beast offers to spare the father’s life if one of his daughters returns to accept his punishment. Belle volunteers and thus her captivity commences. While Belle initially fears and despises the Beast, she eventually falls in love and weds him. In Beaumont’s version, the Beast transforms into a prince when Belle confesses her love to save his life. While Jean Cocteau’s 1946 film adaptation, *La Belle et La Bête*, ends in a similar manner, one element distinctly changes. Cocteau’s version adds the male suitor Avenant, portrayed by actor Jean Marais, who pursues marriage to Belle. His jealousy drives him to murder the Beast at the film’s conclusion.

In Cocteau’s film, despite her attempts to help the Beast, Belle does not save him as she does in the Beaumont version. Instead, Avenant’s greed overpowers his desire to murder the Beast, and he falls into Diana’s Pavilion where the Roman goddess kills him. Upon Avenant’s death, his body transforms into a beast, and Diana’s magic resurrects Belle’s Beast.
as a white prince. During this final scene, the film reveals that actor Jean Marais portrays both Avenant and the Beast. Throughout her captivity, the Beast proposes marriage to Belle several times, yet she does not concede to his request until he resembles the white human Avenant. Because the same actor performs as Avenant and the Beast, Cocteau blurs the lines in their identities and race. While Avenant symbolizes white European egotism and violence, the Beast represents the racial Other like the Native Americans. Cocteau’s film enacts this binary in the Beast and Avenant’s identities to reverse the traditional captivity narrative’s typical conclusion. If Belle admits her love after the Beast’s metamorphosis, then she accepts him only through his white race thereby rejecting his previous identity as the Other.

Cocteau’s unique opening credits feature him writing the title and cast on a blackboard while Jean Marais erases them, which signifies transformation and erasure of identity. The camera never captures Marais’s face but rather his profile; the audience does not immediately identify him as the other man at the blackboard. While Cocteau draws the board, Marais sits with a dog, which foreshadows his role as the Beast. When the camera draws nearer to the board, Cocteau writes, “Jean Marais” first, which Marais immediately erases (La Belle). Thus, Cocteau provides Marais’s identity which Marais destroys. Later in the film, Avenant dies as a monster similar to the Beast, but the Beast dies and resurrects as Avenant’s doppelganger. Already, Cocteau reveals the film’s conclusion in this subtle manner while appearing before them as the director in order to foretell his creative license over the traditional tale’s ending. While the audience initially perceives Avenant as the hero and the Beast as a villain, Cocteau plays against these preconceptions and reverses them. Instead, Belle serves as the film’s guiding force when she attempts to save the Beast, while Avenant acts as the antagonist because he wants Belle to see him as a hero through his violent acts.

La Belle et La Bête commences with an act of violence in order to display the white man’s brutality. While most captivity narratives begin in media res with a Native American attack, the opening shot shows two arrows hitting a target as Belle’s sisters, Felicie and Adelaide, scream “That girl. You know how she is. She can’t do a thing” (La Belle). The film characterizes Belle as a sympathetic character who works as a servant in her own home, and who already inhabits a form of captivity. Belle possesses no personal freedom and lives to serve her sisters and father. The film opens with the sisters chastising Belle, underscoring their cruelty and Belle’s dire situation. Before visually revealing Belle and her sisters,
Cocteau’s focus remains on the archers, Ludovic and Avenant. Ludovic shoots an arrow first and misses, but Marais, who portrays Avenant, does not turn towards the camera when he enters the shot, so the audience cannot identify him. Ludovic, the first archer, accuses Avenant: “Cheater! Your foot’s not on the line” (*La Belle*). Cocteau portrays Avenant as immoral before the audience sees his face, which foreshadows his role as the violent, corrupt antagonist. Avenant’s arrow enters the room, revealing Belle hemming her sister’s dress. When the shot returns outside, Avenant obscures his face, thereby concealing his identity, before asking: “Is Belle alright?” (*La Belle*). Thus, Avenant reveals his feelings toward Belle, though the audience cannot properly identify Marais. Cocteau cannot risk the audience empathizing with the well-known Marais instead of recognizing Avenant as the film’s antagonist. However, this also foreshadows Marais’s revelation as the Beast in the film’s conclusion. The Beast’s physical identity masks his true character until Cocteau reveals him as the white prince. Later, Avenant reaches into the frame to take the arrow while Belle cleans and finally reveals his face when he kneels down to her and proclaims: “Belle, you were not meant to be a servant. Even the floor longs to be your mirror. You mustn’t go on slaving day and night for your sisters” (*La Belle*). Despite Avenant’s negative characterization, he enters this scene as a caring friend to Belle, though his true intentions may reflect his lecherous nature. This personality trait mirrors animal behavior despite that Avenant represents civilized white society. When the film shows Avenant in a close up, he does not look directly at Belle when he claims, “I love you,” but turns to her to say, “Marry me” (*La Belle*). Avenant’s love appears disingenuous in this regard, though his desire to wed Belle sounds sincere. Therefore, Avenant desires a union to benefit himself rather than Belle. This parallels the Beast’s proposals, who genuinely appears to love Belle. Avenant’s selfish interest in Belle symbolizes white insincerity. He wants to marry her to fulfill his desire to fit the traditional European image where a wealthy, noble man has a family rather than as an act of love.

Belle’s initial characterization portrays her as loyal and hardworking which gives her more import and helps the audience sympathize with her through the film. When Avenant proposes to Belle, she responds: “No, Avenant. You mustn’t speak of that again” (*La Belle*). Despite her current living situation, Belle remains loyal to her family when they need her. This foreshadows her later loyalty to the Beast when she visits her family and returns to save him. Belle’s selflessness also portrays her vulnerability which makes her susceptible to domestic captivity. Cocteau shifts
the focus to Belle’s selfish family so the audience further understands her virtuous nature. Belle’s father holds significant debt that threatens the family’s lifestyle, and Ludovic, her brother, borrows money from a creditor who seeks repayment. Thus, Belle’s family creates her degrading living situation through their greed and ignorance where she acts as their servant rather than a daughter. When Belle’s father attempts to settle these debts, he asks his daughters what they want when he returns from town. Belle’s sisters respond: “Bring us back some brocade dresses. Jewels, dresses, and ostrich feathers!” (La Belle). Cocteau further illustrates the sisters’ selfishness and living beyond their means. While they wear elaborate dresses and jewelry, Belle dons a basic maid’s uniform. This visual dynamic and their unrealistic demands draws the audience’s sympathy toward Belle. When Belle’s father asks her what she desires, Belle responds: “Father, bring me a rose. There aren’t any around here” (La Belle). Belle’s modest request displays her understanding that her father can no longer afford such luxury items. When her father leaves town empty handed, he still seeks the rose, which initiates the Beast’s introduction.

La Belle et La Bête initially presents the Beast as a ruthless, frightening monster, which parallels the white perception of Native Americans in traditional American captivity narratives. After Belle’s father discovers his investment in a shipping vessel fails, he cannot afford to stay in town overnight. As he gets lost in the woods, he discovers a castle with magical inanimate objects lighting his path and pouring him wine until he falls asleep. When he wakes, Belle’s father looks around the property to find and thank the proprietor to no avail. Before he stumbles upon the rose garden, a dead deer stands in his path (La Belle). Cocteau intentionally characterizes the father as honest yet incompetent to contrast against the Beast. The deer’s corpse foreshadows the Beast’s brutality, which serves as a warning to Belle’s father before he cuts the rose. The Beast immediately appears and states, “You steal my roses, the things I love most in all the world. [...] You could have taken anything, except my roses. The punishment for this simple theft is death!” (La Belle). The Beast’s physical appearance, which clearly frightens Belle’s father, signifies white fear of the Other. After the Beast shows Belle’s father great hospitality, the father stealing a rose without asking represents ingratitude and indifference to the Beast’s nature. In a similar manner, the early American settlers cleared land and forced themselves into Native American territory. Eventually, this led to warfare and the common misconception that Native Americans embodied ungodly morals. Kathryn Stodola claims:
“Indians took captives for several reasons. One major reason was revenge. Angry at Europeans who stole their lands and massacred them in wars, Indians sometimes retaliated by subjecting enemy captives to ritualistic ceremonies of torture and death” (2-3). In order to rectify losing what means the most to him, the Beast wants the father to surrender a daughter to him. Thus, the Beast gains a female presence in his castle and vengeance. The Beast states: “Make the most of the chance I’ve offered you. And if your daughters refuse to die in your place, swear to return in three days” (La Belle). Belle’s father assumes the Beast intends to kill one of his daughters rather than keep one captive, so the father returns home believing he must sacrifice himself. Thus, Belle’s family believes the Beast desires to cause them harm and fail to recognize the father’s mistake. If Belle’s sisters volunteer, then the family does not lose much, but Belle’s absence means they give up their caretaker. Though Cocteau reveals the reason later, the Beast wants a bride to break his spell and return to whiteness.

Belle contrasts against the typical captive figure when she selflessly accepts her imprisonment which gives her culpability. When Belle’s father returns, he attempts to dissuade Belle when she volunteers to take his place as the Beast’s sacrifice. She retorts to his request: “I’d rather be eaten alive than die of grief by your side” (La Belle). Belle’s devotion to her family serves as enough motivation that she willingly takes her father’s place. In contrast, her sisters refuse to help their father and mock Belle and her rose. During this scene, Avenant declares he must kill the Beast, but Belle’s father dissuades him. Avenant’s bravado mirrors the white European settlers’ pride and assumption that they possess superior forces in comparison to the supposed primitive Native Americans. The Beast symbolizes the Native American who better understands the landscape and holds the upper hand. His magic and strength tower over Avenant’s arrogance. Despite knowing the Beast intends to kill her and that no man may rescue her, Belle sneaks out of her house while her family sleeps and rides the Beast’s horse, Magnificent, to his castle without hesitation (La Belle). Here, Cocteau reverses the traditional captivity narrative, where the Native Americans take a female captive, through Belle’s brave stride to save her father and accept his punishment. In this sense, she also upholds her father as a patriarchal figure. Christopher Castiglia writes: “Accounts of the captivity narratives as unchanging tales of brutality and torture, for instance, cast Native Americans as savage and natural, while representing white women as helpless” (5). Cocteau characterizes Belle as bold rather than a typical damsel in distress. The
Beast does not kidnap her, so her running to take her father’s place contrasts against the typical captivity narrative trope when a Native American captures a docile woman. Though Belle initially fears the Beast, she later reproaches his animalistic behavior. However, Belle’s devotion to her father serves as her motivation to eventually return home.

Despite Belle’s seemingly flawless bravery, she fears the Beast and treats him as the non-white European Other. When Belle enters his castle, she runs ahead as if accepting her fate, but when she sees her father in the Beast’s magic mirror, she attempts to leave (La Belle). Her faithfulness serves Belle to a fault. Like the traditional captive, Belle clings to her white roots and ideals when she enters captivity. When Belle runs outside, the Beast appears and loudly calls, “Where are you going,” causing Belle to faint after seeing him (La Belle). Through Belle’s defeat, the audience views the Beast as the antagonist rather than the mistreated Other who takes his rightful vengeance. After all, Belle’s father steals what the Beast treasures the most, so he hurts the father more than Belle through her captivity. In the traditional captivity narrative, the Native Americans appear as villainous to the early American colonists, yet they act in retaliation rather than animal instinct. Cocteau reverses both Belle and the audience’s preconception of the Beast in the following scene when Belle wakes to see the Beast emotionally gazing at her. He instantly recoils, saying, “Belle, you mustn’t look into my eyes. You needn’t fear. You will never see me except each evening at seven” (La Belle). Eyes represent an individual’s identity, and the Beast fears Belle knowing his true nature. Underneath his foreboding exterior, the Beast feels love and sadness to a greater degree than any other character in the film. Belle’s expression causes shame in him about his appearance when their eyes meet. While he does not relish in her fear, the Beast avoids empathy as he keeps a distance in their relationship. Thus, he feels no guilt, and Belle continues believing his superiority over her. Similarly, Avenant does not look into Belle’s eyes when he claims to love her which appears disingenuous. Cocteau displays the translucent binary in Avenant and the Beast’s identities through their contrasting approaches to gain Belle’s sympathy without risking their masculinity. Later as Belle eats dinner, the Beast appears and requests to watch her eat, but when Belle replies, “You are the master,” the Beast claims, “There is no master here but you” (La Belle). The Beast gives Belle the personal freedom she did not previously possess at home. Other than requesting to see her at dinner each night, the Beast allows Belle free reign around his castle. Similarly, Native Americans often let their female captives work and roam in their tribal confines. Of course,
Belle continues to view the Beast as “repulsive” and responds: “I don’t feel at ease in all this finery, and I’m not used to being waited on. But I sense you are doing everything to help me forget your ugliness” (La Belle). While she acknowledges the Beast’s gratitude, Belle condemns him and believes his actions possess motivation. In her perspective, the Beast wants Belle’s trust and perhaps holds lecherous intent. To deflect Belle’s preconceived image of him, the Beast states: “My heart is good, but I am a monster” (La Belle). This statement reflects not only the Beast’s existence, but also the Native Americans in captivity narratives. While the Beast appears as an intimidating force, he possesses no ulterior motives other than revenge against Belle’s father, though the audience does not know he also wishes to regain his whiteness. In fact, the Beast appears to love Belle, and she eventually appreciates his kindness and the personal freedoms she gains. After the Beast reveals himself as good, Belle says, “There are men far more monstrous than you, though they conceal it well” (La Belle). Cocteau references Avenant’s true nature as a monster and how his handsomeness hides the violent, reproachful man within him. The film displays several instances of Avenant slapping or hitting people, but the Beast never harms anyone. Even in this earnest exchange, Belle still treats the Beast as the Other. The Beast reveals his true intent when he says “I will ask you a question. Always the same question. [...] Belle, will you be my wife?” (La Belle). When Belle denies the Beast’s proposal, he politely leaves without explaining his motivation. Cocteau never reveals why the Beast wants to wed Belle until the film’s conclusion. If Belle marries him, the Beast returns to his human form. The Beast wants Belle to accept and love him in his savagery, so he accepts her refusals as she continuously views him as a monster.

As Belle and the Beast’s relationship develops, she continuously views him as the Other despite their cordial interactions. Thus, she cannot break her perception of the Beast as an animal. While roaming the castle grounds, Belle discovers the Beast drinking from a stream like an animal, and, as she turns to leave, her expression does not reveal disgust but rather intrigue (La Belle). As she discovers her personal freedom and sees the Beast as docile rather than savage, Belle no longer fears him. However, she only appreciates his kindness to an extent. Belle repeatedly rejects the Beast’s proposals. After Belle leaves the Beast at the stream, Cocteau transitions to the Beast approaching Belle and inquiring why she skipped dinner. Belle replies, “I’m not hungry. I’d rather walk with you” (La Belle). Belle not only displays confidence that contrasts against her previous sheepish characterization, but she also defies the Beast’s
expectations. At this point, the Beast believes that Belle finds him repulsive, yet she directly tells him that she wants to spend time together. During the film’s time period, Belle makes a bold statement in her approach. As their conversation continues, the seemingly reserved Beast twitches his ears as a deer passes them. The Beast stops listening to Belle as he visibly lusts after this fawn. When Belle asks, “Where are you?” in reference to his attention, the Beast replies “Forgive me,” and they clasp hands as he suppresses his animal instinct (*La Belle*). Though Belle fails to see the Beast’s human qualities, he desires Belle to see him as a man rather than a monster. While she begins to empathize with his persona, Belle cannot look past his hairy exterior. At this point, Cocteau displays the Beast’s inner turmoil and inhibitions. While he appears confident and frightening when he first approaches Belle’s father, the audience now understands how the Beast desires Belle’s love and approval. As they walk together, the Beast leans against a wall and claims, “I’m thirsty,” so Belle walks to a fountain and offers, “Drink from my hands.” The Beast, kneeling before her, asks Belle, “It doesn’t repulse you to let me drink from your hands?” Belle responds, “No, Beast. I like it” (*La Belle*). Belle’s sincerity and natural hospitality finally extends to the Beast. However, this intimate moment parallels how a person adores a pet rather than a person. Though Belle slowly begins to appreciate the Beast, Cocteau poses them in this dominate-submissive position to display their role reversal. Belle holds power over the Beast because he loves her, and he gradually turns from captor into her servant. The Beast’s vulnerability eventually makes him trust Belle to return home.

When Belle appeals to the Beast that she wants to return to her family, she reveals her racism and superiority complex over the Beast. In this scene, Cocteau also hints at Avenant and the Beast’s connection. Awaiting the Beast in the dining room, Belle listens to the clock strike eight when he finally arrives. She scolds him, “You’re very late,” to which he responds, “Thank you for noticing, Belle” (*La Belle*). Belle’s life in captivity revolves around the Beast, though he allows her free reign around his castle. While she misses her family, Belle spends her days thinking about her next meeting with the Beast. Thus, Belle grows emotionally dependent on him. However, Belle falls to her knees while pleading to go home to her father, so she still feels a connection to her previous life. The Beast responds: “It is I who should kneel and take orders from you” (*La Belle*). Belle does not take advantage of the Beast’s offer, though. While the Beast provides her with lavish clothes and food, catering to her every whim, Belle still mourns her father’s
absence. Though Cocteau displays her loyalty to family, Belle fails to assimilate as many captives eventually do. The Beast inquires, “When you return, will you be my wife?” Belle weeps in response, “You’re killing me” (La Belle). Despite that the Beast concedes to Belle’s return home, she still refuses his only request. When Avenant proposes, Belle declines because she cannot abandon her family. The Beast provides a lavish lifestyle and possesses the means to aid Belle’s family, but she cannot see past his identity as a monster. As the Beast cries and proclaims that Belle will probably leave and not come back to him, she rubs through his hair. The Beast says, “You stroke me the way one strokes an animal,” to which Belle retorts, “But you are an animal” (La Belle). This statement also reflects racism and a superiority complex in Belle. Despite Belle’s inability to view the Beast as her equal, they share an intimacy she previously denies to Avenant. When Avenant embraces Belle, she pulls away, yet she proactively touches the Beast throughout her captivity. While Avenant violates her personal freedom, the Beast encourages her to do as she pleases. The Beast wants time to consider Belle leaving, so he offers to walk with Belle in his garden and discuss the situation further. The Beast asks, “Belle, has another asked for your hand in marriage?” When Belle confirms this, he asks, “Why didn’t you marry him?” Belle responds that she did not want to neglect her father. Finally, the Beast requests “What was this handsome young man’s name?” When Belle says “Avenant,” the Beast clutches his chest and flees into the forest as Belle calls after him. Cocteau establishes an unspoken connection through the Beast’s reaction to hearing Avenant’s name, yet does not address this again until the film’s conclusion. The audience does not yet know that Jean Marais portrays both Avenant and the Beast, so the Beast’s response appears mysterious as if he knows that name.

The Beast’s guilt eventually drives him to allow Belle to visit her family, so he tests her character to see if she truly cares about him. He explains Diana’s Pavilion, a greenhouse-like building that glows near the castle, which holds the Beast’s power. Holding out the pavilion’s key, the Beast states: “I give you the greatest possible proof of trust that one can give in this world. If you do not return, I will die. After my death, you will be safely out of danger, and my riches will be yours” (La Belle). When Belle returns to her family, she carries the option to remain at home or save the Beast. If she allows the Beast to die, she gains his wealth and her freedom. Cocteau establishes this test so Belle’s devotion to the Beast finally overpowers her desire to return home. If her captivity
proves painful as Belle claims, then she should let the Beast die. When she finally sees her family as wretched and selfish, Belle understands the Beast’s devotion to her.

Belle’s return provokes her sisters and Avenant to trick her into staying, but her devotion to the Beast drives her to save him. She contrasts her home life to the Beast’s kindness and finds that her racism against the Beast blinds her. Before Belle teleports home via the Beast’s magic glove, he gives her his magic mirror and his horse, Magnificent. When Belle appears before her family, her sisters do not recognize her in a dress and crown, yet Avenant immediately shouts her name. While the family’s poor opinion of Belle blind them to her presence, Avenant’s infatuation proves he sees beyond her new appearance. However, her sisters spout jealous remarks about Belle’s new clothes and confidence and leave. Belle’s father, Avenant, and her brother remain to question her about the Beast. When Belle explains she must return to the Beast in a week or he will die, Avenant bitterly retorts, “Do you love him?” Belle responds, “No, Avenant. I’m fond of him” (*La Belle*). The Beast serves as a threat to Avenant because he wishes to marry Belle, and Belle’s insistence on the Beast’s good character infuriates Avenant further. Cocteau never stipulates whether Avenant truly loves Belle, but he clearly desires her for reasons other than love. Because the Beast appears more important to Belle than Avenant, his pride must persevere. In conversation with Belle’s brother, Ludovic, Avenant strategizes: “I can’t stand the idea of Belle returning to that beast tomorrow. We must kill him. [...] I don’t believe in magic powers. [...] Convince your sisters there’s something in it for them” (*La Belle*). At no point does Avenant discuss his alleged love for Belle, yet he sees the Beast as a threat to his image. Avenant wants Belle to idolize him, but she infuriates him as she continuously complements the Beast. Thus, Avenant does not want to murder the Beast to save Belle, but rather to preserve his image as a hero. However, Avenant realizes that Belle does not respect his word over her own family, so he asks Ludovic to convince his sisters to trick Belle into remaining at home away from the Beast. Much like the American captivity narrative, Avenant invades the Beast’s castle not to save the damsel in distress but rather prove himself as the superior race. Europeans invaded Native American territory to invoke vengeance, steal property, and murder. Belle’s sisters rub onions into their eyes to fake tears before barging into Belle’s room and pleading with her to stay. As they successfully distract her, the sisters steal the pavilion key. When Belle weeps, Avenant enters to prey on her vulnerability. As he tries to poison her mind against the
Beast, she flees (*La Belle*). Now, Belle’s affections for the Beast outweigh her devotion to her family. While Belle does not realize that her siblings try to deceive her, she finally appreciates the Beast’s generosity. When she returns home, her family expects Belle to continue her daily chores, yet the Beast never asks Belle to work or clean. As Belle reminisces about the Beast, she finds that he means more to her than she previously realized. However, Cocteau never insinuates that Belle desires the Beast as a romantic partner. Belle misses the Beast in a platonic sense, though she appreciates the lifestyle he provides her when she sees the poor conditions in which her family lives.

Cocteau further illustrates white European vanity through Avenant and Belle’s family’s assumption that they are superior to the Beast. As the Beast grieves Belle’s absence, he sends the horse Magnificent as a reminder to keep her promise, which Avenant and Ludovic steal to kill the Beast. When Avenant sees the horse, his expression reveals both shock and recognition. Besides the Beast, the only two characters aware of Magnificent are Belle and her father. Avenant not only appears to recognize the horse, but also speaks the animal’s name. Like the Beast’s reaction to hearing Belle speak Avenant’s name, this scene indicates a further connection between the two characters. Avenant and the Beast never see or interact with each other, yet both obsess over one another due to their interest in Belle. Avenant’s handsomeness and violent tendencies threaten the Beast’s love for Belle, yet Avenant wants to kill the Beast so he may claim Belle as his wife. Before Avenant and Ludovic depart on Magnificent, Belle’s sisters give them their bows and the pavilion key. One of the sisters calls after them and asks “Have we sent them to their deaths?” (*La Belle*). The sisters show forethought and regret only in this instance throughout the entire film. Cocteau foreshadows Avenant’s fate through the sister’s grief. While Belle’s family mock the Beast, the sisters finally consider that the Beast actually possesses great strength and magical powers. This mirrors European women’s fears that the Native Americans practiced sorcery and desired to steal their innocence. Their reaction further cements the Beast as the non-white Other.

The film’s climax and conclusion finally cement the Beast and Avenant’s connection. Belle, unaware that Avenant and Ludovic arrive at the castle, teleports to find the Beast and frantically calls his name because she broke her promise that she would return in a week’s time. In contrast to when she ran into the castle in her father’s place, she runs outside to save the Beast while shouting “My Beast” (*La Belle*). Finally, Belle claims the Beast and admits to herself that she cares about him.
As the Beast lay near a stream, swans hiss at him, signifying white Europeans both hating and fearing him. While Belle tries to save the Beast, she states: “Help me. I am the monster” (La Belle). Belle no longer sees the Beast as monstrous, yet she does not profess love either. She finally understands that her whiteness does not make her superior to the Beast. However, her reaction to his demise indicates the Belle feels dependent on the Beast. He not only provides riches and her personal freedom, but the Beast also listens to Belle’s concerns and acknowledges her opinions unlike her family. Cocteau transitions from this scene to Avenant and Ludovic sneaking into Diana’s Pavilion. Despite possessing the pavilion key, Avenant refuses to open the door because Ludovic claims this might be a trap. Instead, they climb onto the pavilion’s glass ceiling and look down to see gold and Diana’s statue. This scene displays Avenant’s ignorance and bravado. What he mistakes for courage and strength translates to his stupidity, which leads to his demise. However, the gold and Diana reflect how he views Belle as a conquest. Meanwhile, the Beast fades in Belle’s arms as she pleads for him to live. The Beast’s speaks his last words: “If I were a man, perhaps I could do as you say. But poor beasts who wish to prove their love can only grovel on the ground and die” (La Belle). The Beast realizes the only personal trait that prevents his and Belle’s union lies within his monstrous exterior. He knows that Belle no longer fears him, yet she refuses to marry him because he is not white. Cocteau underscores Belle’s monstrosity because she broke her promise to the Beast and now watches him die.

Belle’s reaction to the Beast’s transformation indicates that she only loves the Beast when he dons the white guise. Just as the Beast passes, Avenant breaks into the pavilion to take the Beast’s treasure. Diana’s statue readies her bow and strikes Avenant, transforming him into a beast before he dies. The film cuts to a shocked Belle backing away from the resurrected Beast, who now wears jewels and resembles Avenant. Rebecca Pauly postulates: “Avenant repeats the fate of the Beast, being turned from beauty to beast, because he did not believe in the powers of magic” (1). Unlike the Beast who possesses great personal morals, Avenant’s greed drives him to death, yet he also dismisses the Beast’s strength and magic. To Avenant, the Beast represents animal more than man, and therefore Avenant hunts him with a bow without considering physical attacks may not affect the Beast. Regarding the Beast’s transformation into the Prince, Caroline Sheaffer-Jones states: “The Beast and Avenant, who never meet, are brought together in the final scenes through cross-cutting. [...] It is as if, in the film, the Beast’s good
character were reflected in Avenant’s handsome appearance” (11). Jones calls attention to the visual binary Cocteau presents. Belle acknowledges Avenant’s attractive features, yet she despises him as a person. Jones claims that Avenant’s physical perfection represents the Beast’s good nature, which indicates the Beast’s monstrous form symbolizes Avenant’s cruelty. In a sense, the two are opposing sides of the same coin. Both long for Belle’s affection; yet, they repulse her. When the Beast returns as the Prince, Cocteau combines the characters’ best features into one man. As Michael Popkin states, “Belle is accepting, at the end, the very same man (in appearance) whom she rejected at the beginning” (2). Actor Jean Marais performs as both Avenant and the Beast, but when the Beast returns as the Prince, Marais sports shorter hair and royal clothing. In effect, the Prince looks exactly like Avenant, yet possesses the same personality as the Beast. Popkin specifies that Belle accepts the Beast and Avenant as one after rejecting both character’s proposals several times. Even Cocteau claims, “Avenant, the Beast, and the prince are one and the same” (The Art 136). Throughout the film, their identities appear entirely different, though they share similarities that build until the climax reveals Jean Marais portrays all three characters. Avenant and the Beast possess frightening, animalistic attributes and claim to love Belle; the difference lies in their personal character. The Beast’s kindness mirrors Avenant’s sculpted features, while Avenant’s violent acts and brutality compare to the Beast’s ugliness. When the Prince approaches Belle, she looks at him in astonishment and proclaims, “Can such miracles really happen?” (La Belle). At once, Belle sees her perfect man who possesses Avenant’s physicality and the Beast’s personality. She no longer wishes to return home to her family and never mentions them again. Her statement also hints at the racism she previously exudes because the Beast no longer looks like a monster. When Belle pretends to feign disappointment and displays complicity, the Prince asks what troubles her and says, “It’s almost as if you miss my ugliness” (La Belle). Belle never professes her love to the Beast, yet she grew to appreciate his differences. She denies that the Prince’s appearance bothers her, yet admits, “You look like someone I used to know” (La Belle). The Prince’s appearance enraptures Belle to the point that she forgets Avenant’s name. Therefore, she erases his identity in her mind’s eye much like Marais erasing his name in the film’s introduction. However, the Prince asks if Belle loved Avenant, and she confirms this notion. When the Prince asks if Belle loved the Beast, she lets out a lustful sigh as she says, “Yes” (La Belle). With the handsome Prince before her, Belle finally confesses her love
to him; yet, she never could when he looked like the Beast. Therefore, Belle accepts the Prince only because of his white identity. Had the Beast remained a monster when Avenant died, Belle would not admit her feelings nor accept his marriage proposal. Despite her fondness for the Beast, his role as the non-white Other repulsed Belle. David Galef reflects: “After the anticipation of magic and sexuality, only the realization is left, with a prince who looks more like a dandelion than a man. [...] He was more interesting as a beast” (105). Indeed, the Prince fails to possess the same presence as the imposing Beast. As the audience’s sympathy grows for the Beast, his transformation into the Prince almost defeats the love story’s purpose. While the audience expects Belle to love the Beast and display how love conquers all boundaries, the transformation totally negates their assumption. Instead, Belle gives into her shallowness and accepts the Prince in lieu of the Beast who nurtures and gives her a sense of independence. When the Prince muses at Belle’s reaction and calls her a “Strange girl,” she replies, “At your service” (La Belle). After this exchange, she accepts her submissive role in his arms as the Prince picks Belle off the ground, and the new couple flies off into the darkness together. While the Beast never expected Belle to submit to him, she willingly does so to the Prince without him asking. Thus, Belle forgets her personal freedom and accepts the Prince as her master, which reverts her to domestic captivity.

The film’s conclusion reverses the typical American captivity narrative conclusion. Jean Cocteau summarizes La Belle et La Bête in his book, The Art of Cinema: “Avenant is handsome, the Beast is ugly. Avenant is a bad boy, the Beast is a good beast. A mixture of the two will make Belle happy by means of a perfect being: Prince Charming” (143). Though Cocteau did not actually believe in this summary, he knew his audience perceived the film in this manner. He emphasizes this interpretation because Avenant and the Beast are not black and white in their differences. However, the characters perceive each other as different. When Belle looks at Avenant, she sees the potential abuse and neglect in his behavior, and she understands the Beast’s vulnerable heart despite his gruff exterior. Therefore, Avenant and the Beast serve as two opposing extremes to Belle. Together as the Prince, their binary forces the antagonistic white European and non-White Other into the perfect man. Thus, Belle exits the film in the arms of both her captor and prototypical hero. Captives usually did not abscond with their captors, leaving their families behind. Kathryn Stodola writes: “Because distraught family and friends willing paid whatever they could to regain their loved ones, ransom was
a second major motive for Indians to take captives” (4). The Beast does not take Belle captive to gain wealth or blackmail Belle’s family. He wants Belle as a potential bride so he can break his spell. In Stodola’s example, most living captives returned to their families. Belle visits her family and decides to return to the Beast, so Cocteau bends the trope in his favor. Stodola also notes: “Many adopted captives grew to love their Indian families and opposed leaving them even when given the opportunity to do so” (5). The film follows this trope to a degree, but Belle sees how her family mistreats her and has a convenient reason to go back to the Beast. The Beast’s transformation into the Prince convinces her to marry him rather than her love for the Beast versus her family. Native Americans did not magically turn white and convince captives such as Mary Jemison to remain in their tribe. The only reason Belle abandons and forgets her family lies within the Beast’s new whiteness.

La Belle et La Bête serves as more than a captivity narrative. Cocteau blurs the lines between whiteness and the Other, and the film’s conclusion often leaves audiences perplexed. Most spectators do not realize actor Jean Marais portrays both Avenant and the Beast, so the reveal comes as a shock. However, the transition makes sense considering the characteristics Avenant and the Beast share. Belle serves as their common motivation, and her own goal to leave the Beast’s castle and return home alters when she realizes her adoration for him. Despite this, she cannot admit her love to him until the Beast’s transformation into the white Prince. As Belle forgets her family and the Beast in the Prince’s presence, her decision to leave and wed her captor reverses the traditional American captivity narrative conclusion when a captive returns to their white family.

NOTES

1. Unlike her siblings, Belle’s father possesses genuine humanity, though he often makes decisions without forethought. This explains his inability to see how his daughters mistreat Belle, so Cocteau does not portray him as an antagonizing force like them.

2. Belle does not realize Avenant is dead.

WORKS CITED


CAPTIVITY AS
USABLE PAST
“I don’t want them to change me in there. Turn me into some kind of monster that I’m not […] I can’t go down without a fight. Only I keep wishing I could find a way to … to show the Capitol they don’t own me. That I’m more than just a piece in their Games” (141-142).
—Peeta Mellark from Suzanne Collins’s *The Hunger Games*

In 2008, Suzanne Collins’s novel *The Hunger Games* introduced audiences to a post-apocalyptic society controlled by a centralized governing body. While this is a common plot in many current young adult novels, *The Hunger Games* deploys the growing trend of dystopian societies in such a way that refashions significant aspects of the traditional American captivity narrative by highlighting the importance of food, the trope of motherhood, and the binary between civil and savage. The twelve districts that comprise Collins’s country of Panem are kept in isolation from each other and from the governing body which creates the primary arena of captivity in the novel. After an attempted revolution, the Capitol instated a yearly spectacle, the Hunger Games, in which an adolescent male and female tribute from each district are thrown into an area to fight until only one tribute remains. Suzanne Collins places her heroine, Katniss Everdeen, in this society and, despite the societal constraints and the dictates of the Hunger Games,
Katniss’s civility shines through. The continuous struggle for food and survival highlights the trope of adaptation surrounding food and necessities that are found in traditional captivity narratives. Katniss actively seeks to breach her oppressive environment by embodying both the civil tribute and the savage captive, a duality that provides her the agency needed to be her own liberator. By voluntarily entering the captivity of the Games, Katniss flips the binary of civil and savage by encompassing both the role of the captive and the liberator and, in so doing, her body signifies the lateral nature of captivity for women in society.

The districts signify the Capitol’s absolute control over the citizens of Panem and serve as forced labor camps, with the Capitol serving as the captor from a far, and it is Katniss’s survivalist nature that illuminates the savagery at play. The fence that surrounds District 12 is the first signifier of the district as a captive space. The chain link fence separating the desolation of 12 from the abundance of resources in the neighboring woods is topped with barbed wire and is meant to be “electrified twenty-four hours a day as a deterrent to the predators that live in the in the woods – pack of wild dogs, lone cougars, bears – that used to threaten [the] streets” (Collins 4). With the scarcity of electricity in district twelve, the fence serves merely as a physical barrier to deter the citizens from leaving the borders of the district. While the fence exists in theory to protect the citizens, Katniss acknowledges it for what it truly is – a way of confining the citizens and forcing their reliance on the Capitol for safety and provisions. In her ability to move fluidly between District 12 and the woods, Katniss accentuates the prison-like nature of the district, thus further defining it as a captive space. The supposed electricity of the fence creates a sense of safety and security for the citizens while simultaneously serving as a deterrent against escape. Katniss’s ability to traversing this boundary elucidates the function of the district as a captive space and critiques the perceived sense of safety the fence provides the citizens as the fence’s sole purpose is to keep the members of District 12 confined. Katniss sees district twelve as a place “[w]here you can starve to death in safety” (Collins 6). The notion of safety in death serves as a reminder of the pseudo-liberation provided by the Capitol through the Games; the tributes either leave the captivity of the districts and return as Victors, or they do not return at all. Katniss recognizes the need to do whatever is necessary to survive and draws on the skill she is best at—hunting. Armed with the hunting knowledge she gained from her father, Katniss voluntarily enters the savage wilderness outside of the fence and takes on the role of hunter. The masculine
traits Katniss must embody in order to provide for her family are traits she chooses that are in turn perpetuated by the Capitol.

The corruption of the Peacekeepers perpetuates Katniss’s ability to traverse the boundaries of District 12, a rebellious act that signifies her ability to be both captive and liberator. Katniss reveals that the Peacekeepers, who function as an implementation of martial law, tend to “turn a blind eye to the few [citizens] who hunt because they’re as hungry for fresh meat as anybody is. In fact, they’re among [Katniss’s] best customers” (Collins 5-6). The Peacekeepers perpetuate the system of captivity as they overlook only what benefits them. In turning a blind eye to Katniss’s hunting, the Peacekeepers reinforce the illegality of her actions and serve as a reminder of the captive space she occupies daily in that her only means of survival are abandoning her civil persona and actively engaging in rebellious behavior outside the boundaries of 12.

By patronizing Katniss and Gale, her friend and hunting partner, the Peacekeepers are enforcing the need for rebellious behavior in order to survive and thrive. By encouraging Katniss to don the persona of the masculine hunter, the Peacekeepers not only condone her rebellious tactics by perpetuating her ability to hunt and trade but also nurse a survivalist instinct in Katniss that will aid her in the Games.

Amidst the struggles in district twelve, Katniss adopts the persona of mother in order to keep her family from poverty and danger and willingly becomes a captive in the games, thus highlighting her ability to be both civil and savage. With inadequate food provisions to promote survival for District 12, deaths that occur in the course of their jobs in the coal mines are treated as an afterthought. After Katniss’s father dies in a mine explosion, her mother is expected to provide for the family after the temporary aid from the Capitol runs out, thus ending the approved grieving period. Mrs. Everdeen, however, “didn’t do anything but sit propped up in a chair or, more often, huddled under the blankets of her bed, eyes fixed on some point in the distance” while her daughters continued to go without food. Her abandonment of her role as mother propels Katniss into that positionality where “[a]t eleven years old, with Prim just seven” she must take “over as head of the family” (Collins 26-27). By assuming the role of head of the family, Katniss acts maternally and puts her immediate needs second to those of her mother and sister. This selfless act highlights Katniss’s maternal instinct and capitalizes on her level of civility in an outwardly hostile and savage living environment.

Her innate desire to protect Prim requires her to privately embrace survivalist tendencies often seen as savage while domestically maintaining
the persona of mother. This portrayal of maternity captivates Katniss in the role of protector and mother. While her mother’s eyes are faced on a point in the distance, Katniss focuses on the immediate future and what she has to do in order to survive. Katniss subconsciously overrides the savage nature of the districts by providing for her family in that not only is she hunting to ensure the survival of her family, she trades with merchants and officials for supplies they need. By embracing her more savage instincts in isolation while domestically taking on a maternal role, Katniss’s desire to protect Prim cements her role as captive mother.

Katniss’s maternal instinct to sacrifice herself in place of her sister initiates her captivity in the role of mother and, in so doing, Katniss’s ultimate act of civility serves as the point of transition between captivities. When Prim is reaped as the female tribute for district twelve, Katniss recalls that she had “[t]aken the tesserae, [and] refused to let [Prim] do the same” and that while she has twenty slips with her name entered in the reaping, Prim only has “one slip. One slip in thousands. The odds had been entirely in her favor” (Collins 21). Katniss slips into a reverie brought about by the outcome of the reaping. Having done everything in her power to keep the odds of entering the arena in her sister’s favor, the fact that the single slip with Prim’s name on it was pulled for the reaping is unfathomable. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian speaks to the shock that accompanies unexpected captivity in her article “Puritan Orthodoxy and the ‘Survivor Syndrome’ in Mary Rowlandson’s Indian Captivity Narrative.” Derounian notes that after Mary Rowlandson was captured, “she fell first into a state of shock that helped to numb her against the physical, emotional, and spiritual dislocation” associated with captivity (87). While Katniss’s shock was triggered by her sister’s impending captivity as opposed to her own, she momentarily becomes physically and mentally numb. As Prim walks towards the stage, Katniss sees the back of Prim’s shirt untucked “forming a ducktail” which brings Katniss out of her stupor and ignites her maternal instincts (Collins 22). In stepping in front of Prim and volunteering as the female tribute for district twelve, Katniss liberates her sister from the Games. At the same time, she cements her role as the captive mother by publicly protecting Prim and, in so doing, Katniss sacrifices her freedom and innocence. Her public embodiment of mother creates a spectacle for the Capitol, an act that despite providing sympathy from the citizens of the Capitol turns her into a hunted captive.

The chosen civility Katniss displays in public, in contrast to the hunter persona she adopts in the woods, highlights her need to adapt to the
captive space she occupies in order to survive, which in turn cements the role of the districts and the games as captive spaces. The Games provide the Capitol with unspoken leverage against the citizens of Panem. Katniss knows that the Games are “the Capitol’s way of reminding [the districts] how totally [they] are at [the Capitol’s] mercy. How little chance [they] would stand at surviving another rebellion” (Collins 18). This knowledge, coupled with her choice to take Prim’s place as District 12’s female tribute sets Katniss apart from the rest of Panem and the latent brutality that exists between citizens. While most citizens see their neighbor or classmate entering the games as a guarantee of their safety (or their children’s safety) for another year, Katniss sees only the danger and almost certain death that awaits Prim in the Games. Similar to the invisibility Katniss achieves in the woods, where she has “a clear view of the valley, which is teeming with summer life” before the reaping, there is a level of invisibility among the citizens that is valued under the Capitol’s gaze. Even in times of prosperity, times when the flowers are blooming and the new life of summer is flourishing, the Capitol has complete and total control over the lives of its citizens, a control that creates a perpetual season of death and decay, which in turn brings out the savagery of the citizens. In an interview with James Blasingame, author Suzanne Collins states that the “Hunger Games themselves are a power tool used as a reminder of who is in charge and what will happen to citizens who don’t capitulate” (726). By creating a society in which savagery veiled by luxury dictates the survival of its citizens, Collins provides her heroine with an arena in which she is able to deconstruct the binary of civil and savage. Katniss’s ability to liberate her sister from the horrors of the Games by sending herself into captivity at the hands of the Capitol reinforces the notion that, despite the luxury and extravagance that surrounds Panem’s governing city, the use of the Games as a power tool casts President Snow and the Gamemakers into a hostile, savage light. Katniss has a clear view of what awaits her sister in the arena of the Games as she has adopted a survivalist persona when she enters the woods to hunt. In her willingness to once again don her brutal role as hunter and killer, this time with people as the target, Katniss sets aside her own desires in favor of the well-being of her family and, in so doing, envelopes herself in a civility thus far unseen in a tribute.

Throughout her time in the Capitol before the games, Katniss’s structured transformation from a citizen of District 12 to a tribute in the 74th Hunger Games emphasizes her ability to choose between the roles of savage captive and civil tribute. Katniss’s civility is first focused on...
during the train ride to the Capitol after the reaping. Effie remarks that unlike Katniss and Peeta, “[t]he [tributes] last year ate everything with their hands like a couple of savages” and praises Katniss and Peeta for their table manners (Collins 44). Effie’s focus on the tributes’ manners and how they present themselves reinforces the Capitol’s view of the districts as hostile and savage environments and the citizens as less than human. Despite growing up in the most impoverished of the districts, Katniss’s ability to present herself in a civilized manner highlights her ability to fluctuate between the roles of civilized participant and savage captive. Veering from the accepted view of savages as people who eat with their hands, Katniss embraces the civility that is customary in the Capitol and, in so doing, places herself in the position to occupy both cultures in the sense that she provides herself with an escape from the savagery associated with the districts by choosing the role attributed to the civilized upper class. The transitional space represented by the train ride from District 12 to the Capitol emphasizes Katniss’s need to transform form a citizen of 12 to a tribute of the 74th Hunger Games. Katniss’s civility is coupled with humility when she meets her prep team. After the members of her prep team remark that Katniss “almost looks like a human being” after they pluck, tweeze, and subtly alter her appearance, Katniss sweetly replies, “Thank you (…) We don’t have much cause to look nice in District Twelve” (Collins 62). While this reaction, when accompanied with her forced smile, could come across as a hostile reaction to the demeaning comment from the prep team, Katniss choses to act with humility and grace. By playing along with the comments from her prep team regarding the savage-like appearance she previously displayed, she once again choses the path that highlights her capability to be both captor and liberator. In this instance, Katniss’s choice to embrace her prep team’s view of her as a “poor darling” who can only be “absolutely gorgeous” after she has been made over casts her not only as a civil participant in the games but also as a damsel in distress. In her article “Dressed for the Part: An Analysis of Clothing in Suzanne Collins’s Hunger Games Trilogy,” Deirdre Byrne draws on the Cinderella analogy where, “Katniss is a classic downtrodden protagonist who makes good because of her inner worth, which is revealed through a beauty transformation” (55). By likening Katniss to Cinderella, in that she is downtrodden and her inner worth is only realized by way of a makeover, Byrne emphasizes Katniss’s dual role of captor and liberator as her appearance prior to meeting with her prep team keeps her firmly in the role of savage tribute, a role she liberates herself from by
virtue of her inner worth that is revealed post beauty transformation. While her ability to transform and liberate herself gives Katniss a small amount of power over the Capitol in that she is not confined to their beauty-based binary, Katniss truly has “no choice in her appearance, and by extension, in the identities she is forced to perform” (Byrne 55). Katniss is forced to adopt the role of civil participant while in the Capitol. Her appearance becomes indicative of her role as civil as opposed to savage and therefore becomes a representation of her status as captive or liberator. When dressed for the role the Capitol chooses for her, Katniss embodies the captive as she performs a more civilized role than expected in order to promote herself for the games and attempt to secure her survival. Katniss’s decision to play the role the Capitol chooses for her, as it allows her to save her sister, reinforces Katniss as the captive mother and illuminates her continued role as captive despite her change in location. Katniss chooses the role she plays; despite moving from a sense of captivity and poverty in district twelve to an environment in the Capitol where she is forced to highlight the civil side of herself in order to survive, thus forcing her to momentarily abandon her normal self and take on a role she is familiar with playing, that of a girl who does what is necessary to survive.

Katniss’s lateral movement between captivities capitalizes on her ability to adapt within the luxury/poverty binary enforced by the Capitol as well as emphasizing the ways Katniss’s role as captive mother sets her apart. During the pre-game interviews with TV host Caesar Flickerman, the first topic discussed is Katniss’s wardrobe. Katniss spreads out her skirt, saying, “I can’t believe I’m wearing this […] I mean, look at it!” to which the audience “ooohs and ahhs. […] [She spins] in a circle once and the reaction is immediate” as she “[lifts] up [her] arms and spin[s] around and around letting the skirt fly out, letting the dress engulf [her] in flames. The audience breaks into cheers” (Collins 128). Katniss’s awareness of the Capitol’s fixation on luxury enables her to cater to the sympathies of the audience by pretending to be in love with the extravagance of Capitol life. Embracing the cheers of the audience allows Katniss to appear as the tribute grateful for a chance to experience such fineries despite her inward loathing and disgust for the Capitol and its citizens. However, the fact that she has to embrace this shift at all highlights the captivity she experiences in the city. By forcing herself to conform, even if only momentarily, to the norms and expectations of the Capitol citizens, Katniss once again choses to play the part of the humble and appreciative tribute to bolster her chances of survival dur-
ing the games. Just as her dress engulfs her in flames, Katniss herself is engulfed in the formalities of being a tribute, of being catered to and pampered just to be further made into a spectacle in the arena where the audience reactions and cheers will stem from the death of her or her fellow tributes. Even her signature look, The Girl on Fire, is created to cater to the luxury of the capitol. It is a look that both embraces the luxury of the capitol and showcases the volatility of the tributes as it is dainty and demure upon first glance but is destroyed by a mere twirl, a simple change in identification and direction. “The costumes that are forced on Katniss emphasize the power of the state to coerce citizens to adopt certain docile identities,” a task Katniss gracefully takes on (Byrne 59). Katniss continues to manipulate the audience of the capitol by playing on their prejudices when later in the interview Caesar talks with Katniss about the reaping and how she volunteered for her sister. Katniss replies, “Her name’s Prim. She’s just twelve. And I love her more than anything” (Collins 129). It is Katniss’s love for her sister that primarily propels her into the games. Katniss paints herself, in the eyes of the Capitol, as a distraught tribute from an impoverished district who is willing to die in order to save the one person she loves more than anything. Katniss’s open display of her love for her sister plays on the Capitol’s sympathies by drawing on how she got to the games to begin with. Coupled with the way she embraces appearing in a dress she cannot believe she is able to wear, Katniss emphasizes her ability to survive in the captivity of the Capitol by playing into the dynamics the citizens expect from her as the female tribute from District 12, an act that sets the stage for methods of adaptability and survival in the arena.

The ability to attack and to take on what would typically be considered a savage role is highly favored by the Gamemakers, forcing Katniss to adopt a more violent persona in order to encompass the role of the savage captive, a role which will increase her odds of surviving the Games. The Gamemakers are tasked with ranking the tributes based on the skills they exhibit during a private training session; however, during Katniss’s session, they appear more interested in the food than in her abilities. Katniss states:

Suddenly I am furious, that with my life on the line, they don’t even have the decency to pay attention to me. That I’m being upstaged by a dead pig. My heart starts to pound, I can feel my face burning. Without thinking, I pull an arrow from my quiver and send it straight at the Gamemakers’ table. […] The
arrow skewers the apple in the pig’s mouth and pins it to the wall behind it. Everyone stares at me in disbelief. (Collins101-102).

The rage Katniss displays catches the Gamemakers’ attention. Their refusal to pay attention to her when their rating will directly contribute to her ability to get sponsors lights a fire in Katniss that triggers her violent, hunter persona. In this private sphere where she is not tethered to the role of mother, Katniss’s savagery emerges. In the training center, she is only responsible for her own survival and, as such, draws on her instinct as she responds to her rage. She draws on the skills she uses while hunting to command their attention yet they focus more on dead prey than Katniss, who is in fact live prey for the other victors. She is a captive at the mercy of her captors; the prospect of her liberation is in the hands of men and women who are only concerned with the delicacies on a platter before them. By shooting her arrow into the apple, the food of the dead prey, Katniss forces the Gamemakers to acknowledge her, the live prey. While the act of loosing the arrow towards the Gamemakers and the pig was involuntary, Katniss’s ability to rely on her hunting instincts while she is in a room full of her captors, the very people who will design the arena and all of the challenges it holds, is a prime example of her choice to adopt a violent persona in order to ensure her survival. As with traditional captivity narratives where the survival of the female captive “depends on her ability to conform to Indian values and practices,” Katniss’s survival depends on her ability to conform to the Capitol values and practices (Wesley 52). This is where Katniss’s persona of the savage captive becomes highly important. She draws on her inner anger towards the Gamemakers as a way to command their attention, thus subtly playing into the Gamemakers and the Capitol’s view of violence and savagery as entertainment. The score she receives from the Gamemakers, an eleven out of a possible twelve, reinforces Katniss’s need to embrace such a persona as the Capitol thrives on the excitement created by the violence of the Games. Katniss’s ability to perform the role of both savage captive and civil tribute while in the Capitol, combined with her ability to perform those same roles in district twelve, highlights not only her ability to adapt in order to survive, but also her ability to survive movement between different arenas of captivity. The captive spaces Katniss occupies are uniform and human-made, each favoring the civil but requiring violent or savage impulses in order to survive, thus, illustrating the continuity of captivity for Katniss. Like the other captive spaces created by the Capitol, the fence surrounding
District 12 and the training center in the Capitol, the games serve to imprison the tributes, in this case “in a vast outdoor arena that could hold anything from a burning desert to a frozen wasteland” (Collins 18). The arena for the 74th Hunger Games is a forest landscape that mimics the woods outside of 12. While the Capitol can choose between a vast array of outdoor arenas, their use of the forest is significant as it is this man-made forest that ultimately poses the biggest threat to Katniss’s survival. In the arena, Katniss embodies what Annette Kolodny refers to in her article “Among the Indians: Uses of Captivity” as, “the image of the predatory savage deserving of extinction” (Kolodny 192). Katniss is forced to embody the role of the hunter in order to escape being the hunted. As opposed to when she hunts in the woods outside of 12, in the arena, Katniss is unable to completely rely upon her instincts as the contents of this wilderness have been chosen and strategically placed by the Gamemakers. It is the man-made nature of the wilderness that turns Katniss into the predatory savage. She is forced to abandon the civility she exhibited earlier in order to survive during her captivity in the Capitol, a task which requires her to value her own life above others, which goes against her innate nurturing instincts. In her article, “Puritan Daughters and “Wild” Indians: Elizabeth Oakes Smith’s Narratives of Domestic Captivity,” Caroline M. Woidat quotes Gary L. Ebersole as describing the captivity narrative as “an ultimate boundary situation where human existence, identity, and ultimate meaning are called into question” (Woidat 21). Categorizing the captivity narrative as an “ultimate boundary situation,” the Games become a physical representation of those boundaries. With the identity of the wilderness defined by the Gamemakers, Katniss becomes prey in an environment where she is normally the hunter. Contrary to the ease with which she navigates the wilderness and, by extension, her captivity at the beginning of the text, when faced with the fabricated wilderness of the Games, Katniss is forced to rely heavily on both her savage and civil instincts in order to navigate the ever changing terrain created by the Gamemakers.

The Gamemakers, as agents of the Capitol charged with policing the action of the Games, actively incite violence and eliminate peace, showing how the savage underbelly of the civil Capitol can only be satisfied by human violence. A couple of days into the Games, Katniss awakens to a wall of fire closing in on her location. She notes:

The flames that bear down on me have an unnatural height, a uniformity that marks them as human-made, machine-made,
Gamemaker-made. Things have been quiet today. No deaths, perhaps no fights at all. The audience in the Capitol will be getting bored, claiming that these Games are verging on dullness. [...] It’s not hard to follow the Gamemakers’ motivation. There is a Career pack and then there are the rest of us, probably spread far and thin across the arena. This fire is designed to flush us out, to drive us together. Collins 173.

The creation of the fire to force the tributes together and initiate violence is done purely for the entertainment of the Capitol. The dual nature of fire, savage in the wild yet civil when domesticated, becomes entirely savage when deployed by the Gamemakers to create excitement for the citizen in the Capitol. The fact that boredom on the part of the viewers leads to uniform, machine-made fire as a means of corralling the tributes and inducing fights casts the Capitol as the savage captor, thus painting the tributes as the helpless, civilized captives. Katniss’s recognition of the Gamemakers’ motivation corresponds with her ability to move between arenas of captivity. This brutality on the part of the Capitol harkens back to Kolodny’s notion of the need to drive the predatory savage to extinction. Katniss is forced to take on the role of the savage tribute in order to have a fighting chance in the arena; yet, the manipulation of the Games changes her role from hunter to hunted as a means to comply with the Capitol mentality of the districts and, by extension, the tributes as savage. It is only when Katniss takes on the role of mother in the arena, when she places herself back in the realm of civil, that she is able to successfully navigate the Games. In this moment, the text highlights the oppressive environment of the Games, which is only survivable for those who can navigate both civil and savage personae.

Katniss’s alliance with Rue, the female tribute from District 11, forces Katniss back into the role of public mother which results in her assuming the eventually role of mother of the revolution and reinforces the lateral nature of captivity. As the smallest and youngest of the tributes, Rue reminds Katniss of Prim and her decision to have Rue as an ally speaks to her desire to protect her sister. After planning to destroy the Career’s food supply, Katniss worries “[a]bout Rue being killed, about Rue not being killed and the two of us being left for last, about leaving Rue alone, about leaving Prim alone back home” (Collins 213). Katniss’s primary worries being for Rue and Prim reinforces why she volunteers for the Games. Saving her sister is the only task on her mind when she takes Prim’s place and now, in a different arena, she is once again faced
with the task of saving someone she cares for, someone who reminds her of the reason she chose to be in the Games to begin with. Because she is reminded of Prim, Katniss assumes the role of public mother to Rue. Katniss’s willingness to die for Rue showcases both her compassion and her ability to adapt to various arenas of captivity. In her article “The Metamorphosis of Katniss Everdeen: The Hunger Games, Myth, and Femininity,” Kathryn Strong Hansen notes that as “Rue reminds her so strongly of Prim, Katniss’s protective instincts are triggered. When Rue dies, she experiences the same hopelessness she felt when Prim was reaped” (Hansen 169). It is this hopelessness, one that leads Katniss to her fist kill, that ignites the savagery in her. In avenging Rue’s death, Katniss is killing for friendship which in turn makes her civility a public spectacle. In singing to Rue as she passes into the final sleep and surrounding her body with flowers, Katniss’s body becomes the physical representation of the rebellion thus making her a cog in another political agenda as the mother of the revolution—yet another form of captivity.

When Katniss elects to save Peeta’s life, the Hunger Games make visible how becoming mother keeps Katniss captive by forcing her to look out for Peeta’s survival instead of her own. While she initially resisted any alliance with Peeta, Katniss realizes her best chance at surviving the games is with Peeta as her ally, especially once the Gamemakers announce that two tributes from the same district can be crowned as victors. Katniss is aware that “being one of the star-crossed lovers from District 12 [is] and absolute requirement if [she] want[s] any more help from sympathetic sponsors,” a realization that is reinforced when she finds Peeta severely injured (Collins 247). In order to play up the romance Peeta created when he confessed his feelings for Katniss during his pre-game interview, Katniss must once again rely on her compassion and her domestic tendencies for her survival. The Capitol and the citizens expect Katniss to act maternally towards Peeta and to take on the role of wife, from which the role of mother originates, and care for him in a culturally excepted way. She is expected to re-enter the domestic sphere while in the confines of the games, thus signaling the captivity of mother as one captivity within another. The idea that Katniss and Peeta are star-crossed lovers coincides with the love and role of mother that Katniss displayed when volunteering for Prim, the act that initially won her a small amount of favor in the Capitol. This compassion directly opposes the view of the tributes as savage captives. In this specific arena of captivity, savagery is openly favored over civility but, by showcasing her civility in her previous alliance with Rue and in her current pursuit
to save Peeta, Katniss once again captures the sympathies of the sponsors. However, with Peeta's survival at stake as well, Katniss has to embody both her civil and savage personas. Despite Peeta's disapproval, Katniss goes to a feast put on Gamemakers at the cornucopia in order to get medicine to save him. She returns to their cave with a large gash above her right eye, pulls “the little orange backpack from [her] arm, cut[s] open the clasp, and dump[s] the contents on the ground. One slim box containing one hypodermic needle. Without hesitating, [she] jam[s] the needle into Peeta’s arm and slowly press[es] down on the plunger” (Collins 289). In willingly risking her life to save Peeta’s, Katniss exhibits not only civility and compassion, but also her ability to encompass both the civil and savage simultaneously. As with shooting the arrow at the Gamemakers, Katniss acts without hesitation when Peeta’s life is at stake. She pulls, cuts, and dumps the contents of the bag, and jams Peeta’s arm with the needle, all actions that have violent connotations. While not outright violent, these innate actions Katniss employs speak to the part of her that is accustomed to doing whatever is necessary to survive. In this case, her violence amplifies her tendency towards compassion and mercy as she is only resorting to her hunting instincts in order to save someone she values.

Katniss retools displays of mercy and compassion as liberation moments and, in so doing, highlights the ability of the citizens to rebel against the system implemented by the Capitol. Katniss’s removal from the Games mirrors her entrance in that both occur on her own terms as a result of her desire to protect, once again holding her captive in the role of public mother. As Peeta and Katniss face Cato, the male Career tribute from District Two, they are attacked by Capitol mutations. The mutts attack Cato for hours, and Katniss realizes she “may be able to take him out” and that doing so “would be an act of mercy at this point” (Collins 340). While Katniss knows that the mutts will eventually kill Cato, she realizes that she will be saving him more pain and suffering if she kills him. The notion of taking Cato out as an act of mercy serves as a justification for the act of violence. By electing to show mercy to her greatest adversary in the Games, Katniss once again simultaneously embodies the civil tribute and the savage captive. Not only does killing Cato serve as an act of mercy, but it also functions as a guarantee that Katniss and Peeta will return to district twelve thus further justifying her choice to shoot him. Katniss’s act of mercy when she kills Cato exhibits her desire to protect others which once again cements her role as captive mother. When the Gamemakers revoke their earlier revision to the
rules that allowed both Katniss and Peeta to win, Katniss is willing to take her own life to save Peeta's, and Peeta is willing to do the same. Katniss realizes that “without a victor the whole thing will blow up in the Gamemakers’ faces. They’d have failed the Capitol” and concludes that the easiest way to ensure the Gamemakers’ failure is if “Peeta and [her] were both to die, or [the Gamemakers] thought [they] were” (Collins 344). Katniss’s willingness to not only embrace death, but to die on her own terms emphasizes her role a liberator. She knows the importance of humanity for Peeta, and she knows that dying on their own terms and risking possible public annihilation will emphasize the civility of the districts in that the tributes of 12 are willing to die rather than kill each other. The importance placed on keeping their morals and identities intact while managing to survive is the driving force that compels Katniss to suggest to Peeta that they both eat the lethal nightlock berries. In this case, Katniss’s final act in the arena is one that emphasizes the importance of her role as protector and captive mother in the various arenas of captivity she inhabits. Her last act in the Games is not only a defensive one but an act of defiance as well, an act which momentarily liberates her from the captivity of the Games yet returns her to the captivity of Panem. As the goal of the Games is to fight until one person is left standing, Katniss and Peeta eating the nightlock berries would thwart the games by leaving the Capitol without a lone tribute left standing. If no one is left standing, the end of the Games is unwritten and, if the ending can be unwritten, it can certainly be changed.

In voluntarily entering the captivity of the Games, Katniss takes on the roles of both captive and liberator thus relying on her ability to be both civil and savage to navigate the many captive spaces she inhabits, and, in so doing, her image becomes not only a signifier of captivity but of liberation as well. By surviving the Hunger Games, through a small act of defiance towards the Capitol, Katniss lights a spark of rebellion in the hearts of the citizens of Panem. The liberation promised by the Games becomes the typical pseudo-liberation provided by the Capitol. As a victor Katniss returns to district twelve only to have to return to the Capitol annually as a mentor for the remainder of her life, but her defiance and rebellious actions in the face of her captors sparks a hunger for liberation throughout Panem, leading to a full-blown revolution with Katniss as the figurehead, thus continuing her lateral movement through captivity. From the captivity of the districts to that of the Capitol, from the captivity of the Games themselves to the final captive role as figurehead of the revolution, the Mockingjay, Katniss is forced to continu-
ously juggle her role as a captive and a liberator as well as her ability to be both civil and savage. These four captivities Katniss inhabits suggest not only the eternal nature of captivity but also a perpetual captivity for women in society.

NOTES

1. Suzanne Collins describes Capitol Mutations as animals that are genetic hybrid created by the Capitol as weapons during the previous revolution. The citizens of the districts refer to them as mutts.

WORKS CITED


Actually, the fairy tale exceeds my story in horror. But even so, it isn’t so much worse than what really went on in those frontier times, is it? History tells us worse things than fairy tales do. People were scalped. Babies had their brains dashed out against tree trunks or were thrown into boiling oil when the Indians made their captures. Slavery was the order on the plantations. The Natchez Trace outlaws eviscerated their victims and rolled their bodies downhill, filled with stones, into the Mississippi River. War, bloodshed, massacre were all part of the times . . . The line between history and fairy tale is not always clear, as *The Robber Bridegroom* along the way points out.

—Eudora Welty, “Fairy Tale of the Natchez Trace.”

Eudora Welty’s *The Robber Bridegroom* was initially intended to be a part of *The Wide Net*, a collection of short stories that draws on American history through their inclusion and reference to the Natchez Trace. *The Robber Bridegroom* was ultimately not included in *The Wide Net*, but was rather published as a short novella independent of the other texts. Although Welty has noted that the stories were not intended to be read as historical accounts, in the article “Altering the Course: History, Romantic Nationalism, and Colonial Signifiers in Welty’s Natchez Trace Fiction,” Rebecca L. Harrison suggests that “. . . each [story] locates a dangerous colonizing impulse
that is as personal as it is political and that is more often romanticized than faced head on” (46). The stories diminish the brutality of colonization through the use of fantasy and their idealization of the American dream. Welty deploys violence as commentary on the dark history inherent in the colonizing of America, but in *The Robber Bridegroom* she masks that violence through the use of southern humor and satire. Within Welty’s retelling of The Grimm Brothers’ fairy tale *The Robber Bridegroom*, cultural stereotypes, crime, marriage, and gender are shown to be forms of captivity that impact the discovery of individual identity and reflect the collective unconscious of the society presented in the text. Setting the story on the Natchez Trace at the end of the eighteenth century allows Welty to draw on memory as a representation of a southern regional consciousness steeped in gendered captivity that suggests the nation can never escape the cycle of captivity found in history. In *The Robber Bridegroom*, then, Welty deconstructs restrictive gender roles through the doubling of characters and the conflicting representation of good and evil in order to reveal that the violent history of the colonial impulse continues to negatively affect human nature.

Welty’s successful tobacco planter, Clement Musgrove, reveals the consequences of the colonial impulse on one’s identity early in the narrative as his arrival on the shore of the Mississippi River in Rodney signifies the harm done to the American landscape. The colonization of the Natchez Trace by early colonial settlers was historically violent and corrupt. Clement ventures from Kentucky to Rodney in search of land and profit, but he does so without considering the consequences that would come about by his colonial impulse. When Clement is first introduced, the day is closing and the landscape is dark, signifying the violent history of his initial journey to the land of the Natchez Trace. The narrator says, “As his foot touched the shore, the sun sank into the river the color of blood, and at once a wind sprang up and covered the sky with black, yellow, and green clouds the size of whales, which moved across the face of the moon” (2). The image of blood signifies the violence committed on the native lands and indigenous people, and the landscape mirrors the events of Clement’s captivity narrative. The narrative suggests that time does not stop for any man. The obscuring of the moon symbolizes a loss of time, and it serves as a lens for interpreting the past, suggesting that there is a version of the past perpetuated by early American settlers that is not truthful. As Michael Kreyling notes, “Rodney was founded on violence; the Indians resisted violently and were crushed. This is the contradiction that maims the pastoral ideal:
the maintenance of it requires violence, literal or figurative” (34). History, and historical captivity narratives, are a version of events that do not accurately represent the violence inherent in the colonization of America. Clement, who the text ironically underscores as an “innocent planter,” tries to find an inn with an honest inn keeper, but his quest reveals the impossibility of that task. The first two innkeepers that Clement encounters are both missing an ear, but even when Clement finds an inn keeper who appears to be honest, he too is dishonest. Although a man may appear to be good and honest, he too may have a darker side that is not visible to the common man. Clement is unable to tell the difference between an honest and a dishonest person because he is not part of the bandit culture. At the “honest inn” the innkeeper sets Clement up to be hustled and robbed by the other boarders. Clement assumes that Jamie Lockhart, a con-man and bandit, is actually a wealthy planter who saves his life when Mike Fink, a flatboater and con man, tries to kill him in his sleep. Clement truly believes that Jamie is a good man who saves him, and, as such, he offers to help him in acquiring land and becoming a wealthy merchant. Welty suggests that everyone connected to the market economy that colonized the land of the Natchez Trace are guilty whether they have the obvious markings or not, but, even more, she suggests that criminals are human too and, unless one is of the culture, he may not know that he is in the presence of a thief. As a sign of gratitude, Clement tells Jamie the story of his captivity by the Natchez tribe, which offers insight into the consequences that come with the colonial impulse.

Clement shares his captivity narrative with Jamie in order to show that there are personal consequences for the violence and greed that accompanies colonization and decimation of the indigenous tribes of the Natchez Trace. Welty’s crafting of Clement as a Quixote-type character steeped in humor and satire allows him to emerge as a voice of wisdom and reason in the text, and the way that Clement tells his captivity narrative shows that he is not a fool as one would originally assume, but rather a man with great insight into colonial history and its impact on the individual self. Clement is a representation of regional consciousness, and his use of memory allows one to see that the history of the South and the history of colonial America can never truly be escaped. The captivity narrative begins with a description of Clement’s journey from New Orleans to Rodney, and true to the captivity narrative genre, he tells how his family and friends came to be captured. The death of his wife Amalie and their son changes Clement in a way that allows him to
have empathy and understanding for the Native Americans. There is a loss of innocence when Clement comes to understand how his role as a colonizer led to the death of his family. Kreyling notes that “Clement, however, is not so vehement; vengeance does not consume him, even though he, not Jamie, has lost loved ones and the hands of the Indians” (35). Although the captivity narrative focuses on family and the decimation of the family structure by Native Americans, Clement ultimately displays an understanding of war and colonization as it impacts a body of people. He says, “‘The stars shone down on all our possessions . . . as if they were being counted and found in small number. The stars shone brightly-too brightly. We could see too well to tie up and keep the proper vigil. At some point under the stars, the Indians lured us to shore”’ (21). The greed of colonization and the want of more wealth is what Clement recognizes as the source of his downfall. The pioneers’ desire to keep moving, to continue colonizing, and to obtain more possessions is what left them vulnerable to the Native peoples. By telling his own story, Clement is also telling the history of the Native Americans who, as a communal body, were decimated by colonial settlers. Clement reflects on his life before the journey that would ultimately change him. He says, “I was once married to a beautiful woman of Virginia . . . We lived in the peaceful hills . . . She bore me two blissful twins, a son and a daughter, the son named for me and the daughter named Rosamond” (20). For Clement, the life before captivity was serene, and he had no reservations about the journey that lay ahead. There is no indication that he was aware of the reality of colonization or the dangers they would face during in their quest to find a new land. He says:

The reason I ever came is forgotten now . . . I know I am not a seeker after anything, and ambition in this world never stirred my heart once. Yet it seemed as if I was caught up by what came over the others, and they were the same. There was a great tug at the whole world, to go down over the edge, and one and all we were changed into pioneers, and our hearts and our own lonely wills may have had nothing to do with it. (20-21)

Clement is reflective of his role as a pioneer, and he highlights the regional consciousness that drove his desire to venture across the South and colonize a new place. A culturally imposed mob mentality is the reason for his enacting of the colonizing impulse, and the wave of colonization set out by the settlers before him laid the foundation for his
voyage. Clement does recognize his culpability in the death of his family, but he does not dwell on what he lost. Instead he focuses on the future.

Clement’s story suggests that the Native Americans do hold the settlers responsible for destroying their land and their people, and it is the pioneer’s greed and desire to acquire more land and possessions that is the ultimate cause for the historical violence of colonization. Unlike his new benefactor, Jamie perceives the Natives to be tricksters and calls them savages, ultimately stating that they “[. . .] are so clever they are liable to last out, no matter how we stamp upon them” (21). Welty uses irony to show that Jamie is a trickster who indirectly implies that he too is a savage. The brutality of Jamie’s language suggests that he desires violence and genocide, but, just as Clement, he does not foresee the consequences that will come upon his family. There is a foretelling wisdom when Clement tells Jamie:

The Indians know their time has come . . . They are sure of the future growing smaller always, and lets them be infinitely gay and cruel. They showed their pleasure and their lack of surprise well enough, when we climbed and crept up to them as they waited on all fours, disguised in their bearskins and looking as fat as they could look, out from the head of the bluff. (22)

Clement reveals how the Native Americans made the captive pioneers go “naked like slaves,” and he says, “The son named after me was dropped into a pot of burning oil . . . and my wife Amalie fell dead out of the Indians’ arms before the sight” (23). The son is a doubling of Clement himself, and his death signifies the loss of innocence that comes to Clement as a result of his captivity. Clement recognizes that it was his colonial impulse and his desire for more land that ultimately cost him his family. Ellen Walker and Gerda Seaman note, “Clement who might be expected to miss those days [the time before captivity], spends more time on the process of change, the description of the movement away from the pastoral, than on the past itself . . . Since the child is his namesake, and thus an aspect of Clement himself, we see here the traditional loss at the transitional point of passage” (58). The death of the child shows the impact of Clement’s choices on the future, as he will not have a son to carry on his family name, but Clement focuses on change and seeks to create a new future. The Natives set Clement, Salome, and Rosamond free, but Clement reflects that they “put a sort of mark upon me” (23). The buried history of Clement’s past, just like
the history of the American South, haunts him once again and reflects his loss of innocence. The “mark” is a physical symbol on Clement’s body signifying his culpability in the death of his family, but it is also a representation of the emotional scar that Clement must carry for the rest of his life. Just as one cannot rid himself of a physical mark, Clement can never truly be free of his captivity experience. Kreyling notes, “Clement cannot say what his mark means; but he does share, in an intuitive way, the Indians’ strange and doomed relationship with time” (35). The Native Americans may have been decimated by the colonial impulse of white settlers, but they still have a place in American history. By inflicting a physical sign of their culture on Clement, they are stating their existence and solidifying their place in time.

Welty uses the relationship between Clement and Salome, his second wife, as a means of deconstructing restrictive gender roles in order to show the negative impact of colonization on both individuals. Salome is presented as a two-dimensional character throughout The Robber Bridegroom, and no first person account of her captivity experience is ever recorded in the text. It is only through Clement’s perspective, and his representation of Salome as a captive, that one is given insight into the woman that he marries. The first image of Salome comes at the beginning of Clement’s narrative, when he recalls, “On the flatboat around our fire we crouched and looked at one another—I, my first wife Amelie, Kentucky Thomas and his wife Salome, and the little twins like cubs in their wrappings” (20). At this point in the narrative, they are both in their respective gender roles, Clement as a husband and father and Salome as another man’s wife. After the death of Amelie and their son, Kentucky Thomas is killed. However, Clement does not divulge how Salome reacted to her husband’s death. He just tells Jamie that the Natives were afraid of her because she was so ugly, and that Clement, his daughter Rosamond, and Salome were then “turned out into the wilderness, bound together” (23). Clement says that, “There was no longer anything but ambition left in her destroyed heart. We scarcely spoke to each other, but each of us spoke to the child. As I grew weaker, she grew stronger, and flourished by the struggle. She could have taken her two hands and broken our bonds apart, but she did not” (24). Both man and woman have a loss of voice as the result of their captivity, but the innocent child who is unaware of their circumstances supplies a unified voice. He continues, “I never knew her [Salome] in any of her days of gentleness, which must have been left behind in Kentucky” (24). Representations of Southern womanhood would require a woman to be
weak and submissive, but, in this account of captivity, it is the woman who becomes strong and capable. Clement is depicted as weak, and it is only through Salome that he gains strength and is able to continue the journey. Salome is placed into the role of mother, but Clement suggests that she is a different kind of representation of motherhood than Amelie. He remarks that, “I walked beside this woman Salome, carrying my child, hungry and exhausted and in hiding for longer than I can remember . . .”; then, as he grew weak and Salome grew strong, she took care of the child and “hushed it in her own way” (24). Although Salome is depicted as a hard woman throughout *The Robber Bridegroom*, it is through this captivity scene that she is shown to be human. Salome does not assume a more authentic role of motherhood until the end of the novella when she is advising the young Rosamond in her relationship with Jamie. Just as Clement proves to be the voice of wisdom for Jamie, so is Salome the voice of reason for Rosamond. Welty’s portrayal of the parents as a guiding force for the next generation suggests that it is only through the recognition of the past, and a willingness to reflect on the impact of history on the individual self, that one can ultimately change the future. By making Rosamond the unifying voice between the couple at the beginning of the novel, Welty is able to show the couple as a solitary voice of warning for the next generation.

Welty uses fairy tale conventions to show that Salome is the ultimate villain in the text, and by showing her to be the embodiment of the colonial impulse, Welty suggests that colonization has a negative impact on humanity. Salome is depicted as ugly, and the characteristics attributed to her throughout the text suggest that she is an evil woman. She is shown, “stirring a ladle in a pot of brew,” and she gives Rosamond a recipe for a “brew” that will help her identify her lover. Salome is also a woman who not only owns slaves, but who has a great desire to enslave other people. Not only does she hold Rosamond in a domestic captivity for most of her life, but she sends the girl out into the woods with the hopes that she will be killed and never return home. The step-mother’s nature is exposed when she says, “If you come back without the herbs, I’ll break your neck” (34). Salome is jealous of Rosamond, filled with greed, and does not like that the girl takes part of the wealth that she believes belong to her. There is also a desire on her part to enslave Goat, the boy she hires to kill Rosamond;

Now by some manner and the way things come about, Salome had found a familiar in little Goat, and it was there is the back
of her head to use him for her own ends. She could not buy him for a slave, because he was not in any degree a black African, but she took the old mother a quart jar of picked peaches she had put up with her own hands, and looked so grand, that the mother freely gave her Goat for whatever occasion he was wanted, so long as she got him back. (40-41)

Salome is not only a slaveholder, but she creates her own slave trade. In the South women had a place of authority on the plantation and actively participated in the management of the property. Weak states, “In sharp contrast to the antebellum South, it was generally acceptable in colonial times for women to have an active role in the running of plantations or family farms . . . Women of the early South—even those of the upper class—tended to be more active than antebellum women in their participation in community affairs and in the support of their families” (33). Salome is presented as the embodiment of the colonizing impulse, and she defies historical representations of Southern womanhood through her role as a frontier woman who promotes forms of captivity. Unlike Clement, who lacks ambition and a desire to colonize and cultivate new lands after experiencing captivity, Salome becomes driven to obtain land and wealth. Despite her captivity, she desires to own more slaves and gain more profit. She is not satisfied with the size of her house, no matter how big it is, and is constantly unsatisfied with the means that Clement provides for her. Her desire for power and her power over her husband is shown when she pushes Clement for more money. When he asks if she will ever be satisfied, she exclaims, “Satisfied! . . . Never, until we have got rid of this house which is little better than a Kentuckian’s cabin, with its puncheon floor, and can live in a mansion at least five stories high, with an observatory of the river on top of that with twenty-two Corinthians columns to hold up the roof” (100). Salome embodies the colonizing impulse by showing that she is never happy with having a little, she must always strive to have more. The house is representative of a domestic space, and as a woman, she would have more power and influence in her community if her husband owns more land and she has a bigger home. McMillan notes that the house Salome is describing is Windsor Castle, a historical landmark that was not built until 1861. She states, “Within the context of her novella, this asymmetrical jump makes perfect sense. For the important truth rests in the notion that whether we are discussing 1861, or the centuries before or after that time, materialistic desire is a continual component
of humanity” (83). By being ahead of her time and requesting a mansion which had historically not been built yet, Welty foreshadows the perpetual movement of Manifest Destiny that eventually did occur in the South. Salome’s extravagance is accentuated by the humble nature of Clement, who despite his objections goes to acquire more land to make her happy.

Although Salome is shown to be the villain in the text, Welty ultimately suggests that the role of Southern womanhood is a façade that is abused by women as a means of enslaving other women. It is clear in the beginning of the *The Robber Bridegroom* that Salome never had any children of her own, but she was willing to assume the role of mother after Clement, Rosamond, and herself were set free from captivity. When Rosamond ventures out into the woods and her clothes are stolen by a bandit, it is Salome who is most insistent in discovering the truth of the event. Although Salome’s concern in Rosamond’s affairs is that of self-interest, it also shows her desire to uphold the patriarchal constructs of society. She punishes the girl for her indiscretions by making her diligently clean the house and do other manual chores around the plantation. At the end of the story, though, Salome takes on the role of advisor when Rosamond returns home pregnant and does not know the identity of her husband. When Rosamond goes to seek out the bandit, “[. . .] she[Salome] advised her to take one of the tomahawks with her also, to protect herself with, in case her husband should turn out to be too horrible to look at [. . .]” (125). Salome already knows that the bandit is Jamie Lockhart, but she puts on a façade of empathy for Rosamond. She subverts the role of motherhood to meet her own ends. By having Salome use the role of mother as a means to harm the girl, Welty suggests that the role of Southern womanhood is a façade that is abused by women as a means of enslaving other women.

Welty uses the princess fairy tale trope in conjunction with historical representations of Southern womanhood to present Rosamond as a submissive female who can never truly escape the rule of her patriarchal society. When reflecting on the characters of *The Robber Bridegroom*, Welty states, “And the intention further directed that beyond the innocent planter, the greedy second wife, the adventurous robber, the story needed its beautiful maiden. Of these, as we know, there were plenty in that part of the world: they were known as ‘the Rodney heiresses’” (Welty 305). The Rodney heiresses were historical Southern women of means who were looked upon as examples of Southern womanhood; this historical representation of the “southern belle” is a submissive
woman, often of weak condition, who looks to patriarchal figures for
guidance and protection. Weaks notes, “Although women living in
frontier regions of the South retained, out of necessity, those qualities
of the ‘undaunted dames,’ middle-and upper-class white women of
more settled regions became increasingly influenced by the myth of the
southern lady. This new model of womanhood favored the delicate and
pious, pure and soft-spoken” (34). This “act of southern womanhood”
was a social code that women were meant to uphold, and Rosamond
both embodies and refutes this social ideal. In the article, “Southern
Ladies and the Southern Literary Renaissance,” Peggy Prenshaw sup-
ports Annette Goodwyn Jones’ argument that “More than just a fragile
flower . . . the image of the Southern lady represents her culture’s idea
of religious, moral, sexual, racial, and social perfection” (Prenshaw qtd
Jones 74). Prenshaw continues, “Particularly in the view of nineteenth-
century writers, this image was extolled not only as an ideal but an
attainable one, and in countless ways the Southern White Woman was
encouraged to shape, repress, modify, and monitor her behavior to cre-
ate her own perfectness” (Prenshaw 74). At the beginning of The Robber
Bridegroom, Rosamond is described as “[. . .] truly a beautiful golden-
haired girl, locked in the room by her stepmother for singing, and still
singing on, because it passed the time away better than anything else”
(32). Rosamond, though held captive by her stepmother, has a hope-
ful young voice of joy and, like a traditional fairy tale princess, dreams
of love and longing. She takes “the time to dress herself in a light blue
gown, bind her hair with a ribbon, and bake herself a little hoecake for
lunch” before assuming her venture into the forest (33). Even before
she begins her journey away from society, Rosamond dresses herself as
a proper southern belle and cooks a meal. She is shown to be good, but
her behavior of what is good is a social construct. Rosamond evidences
an affinity with nature when she is tasked with milking the cows, but
all of the animals on the plantation are held in captivity and domes-
ticated. It is only within a captive, physical construct that Rosamond
can be attuned to nature. While Rosamond does obtain a certain degree
of agency by deciding to leave society and join the bandit culture, she
still adheres to the code of a southern belle. Tanya Carinae Pell Jones
states, “The princesses, servant girls, and other heroines created by the
likes of the Grimm Brothers, Hans Christian Andersen, and Perrault
are usually obedient and mild young ladies, reluctant to sin for fear of
tainting their souls. Yet, Rosamond is more interested in her own desires,
curiosities, and simple self-preservation than modesty and tradition”
Like Salome, Rosamond is also a woman who is driven by the colonial impulse, but it is only after she goes to Jamie’s home and begins partaking of his bounty that she is shown to be negatively affected by it. Although she is not a bandit in the sense that Jamie is, Rosamond still assumes the role of colonizer as an extension of Jamie Lockhart. The physical union of the Jamie and Rosamond signifies an extension of one into the other. Rosamond upholds the constructs of patriarchal society through her domestication of the home, and Jamie upholds the colonizing impulse through his acquisition of land and profit. From the beginning to the end of the novella, Rosamond faints and assumes the role of a damsel in distress. Her daydreams, and the fairy tale dreams of women in Southern society, may not impose outward harm on others, but they are detrimental to the well-being of the women themselves.

Unlike the traditional princess, however, Rosamond is flawed and always tells lies signifying that southern women in their social codes are living a lie. When Clement returns home from New Orleans and he asks where Rosamond has been, she lies and says she was out in the woods when “ [. . .] a little old panther came out from behind a holly tree and rubbed up against my side. I took him in my arms . . . and he gave me a little purr. Just then the mother panther let go from the tree above my head [. . .] The first thing I knew she took me up in her teeth . . . and carried me all the way home through the woods before she set me down at the gate” (37-38). The exaggeration of events shows that Rosamond is seeking adventure in her life, which she soon finds in her quest to enter a bandit culture. Jones notes, “With her propensity for lying, her flippant disregard for authority, and her unrepentant attitude toward the loss of her virginity, Rosamond is, in effect, an antiheroine” (139). When discussing The Robber Bridegroom at a conference, Welty explains:

And Rosamond, ‘did not mean to tell anything but the truth, but when she opened her mouth in answer to the question, the lies would simply fall out like diamonds and pearls.’ So she had every fairy-tale property. Diamonds and pearls normally fall from the lips of fairy-tale maidens because they can speak nothing but what is truthful and pure-otherwise, the results is snakes and toads—but Rosamond is a romantic girl, not a wicked one, and the lies she’s given to telling are simply a Rodney girl’s daydreams, not intended to do any harm: perfectly good pearls. (305)
Rosamond, thus, does not lie out of malice. She simply conveys the fantasies that she desires to come true. The daydream is the illusion, and American women are raised in a culture where they are taught to dream of a romanticized love. In *The Robber Bridegroom*, however, this dream is subverted by the violence perpetuated by the men. Rosamond may be a southern belle, but her relationship with Jamie is far from a fantasy. Jamie pretends to be a proper southern gentleman when he is actually a thief who kidnaps and rapes Rosamond. In the essay, “‘What I Would Have Given Him He Liked Better to Steal: Sexual Violence in Eudora Welty’s *The Robber Bridegroom*,” Correna Catlett Merricks suggests:

> This false self that women had to present creates the image of a ‘true self’ hidden underneath the surface; Welty presents this idea through the doubling of characters . . . Through the creation of doubles, and through the doubling that exists in many different components of her story, Welty reveals that the romantic traditions of the South, and of patriarchal culture, also include oppressive and violent traditions. (Merrick 5)

By depicting Rosamond as a flawed princess and a southern belle, Welty shows that the idea of southern womanhood is itself a lie. Rosamond has the façade of a sweet Southern belle, but her flaws suggest that she is indeed playing along with the modern social codes of the South.

Rosamond romanticizes the idea of the southern gentleman and eternalizes the desire to have a husband, but in reality her prince violates her in innumerable ways. Rosamond’s perception of Jamie shows the impact of the veil of fiction on historical truth. The crimes committed against Rosamond are horrible, but the fictional version of their romance makes it palatable to the reader and suggests that it is acceptable under the veil of romance. When Rosamond ventures away from society, the reader is told, “First Rosamond went through the woods and then she passed along the field of indigo, and finally she came to the very edge, which was by the side of a deep, dark ravine. And at the foot of this ravine ran the Old Natchez Trace, that old buffalo trail where travelers passed along and were set upon by the bandits and the Indians and torn apart by the wild animals” (44). The dark setting alludes to the violence of the Natchez Trace bandits and the past, but the scene shows Rosamond walking through the woods, singing and dreaming of love. Welty places this bright young girl in this dark and ominous setting to show the irony of her romantic dreams. She paints the picture of Rosamond
as a naïve youth venturing into the darkness of society. Jamie finds her in the woods and forces her to remove her clothes. Rosamond looks for a patriarchal agent to save her from this violation, but she ultimately romanticizes this encounter with Jamie, unaware of the danger that it poses to herself. Jamie offers to kill Rosamond, but she refuses his offer and, instead, returns to society, though later she searches for her romanticized bandit who violates her. As Welty writes, Jamie takes Rosamond away in what could be read as a scene of passion, but, ultimately, “He stopped and laid her on the ground, . . . and robbed her of that which he had left her the day before” (65). The numerous physical violations of Rosamond reflect Jamie’s colonizing impulse. Merricks observes, “If this scene realizes Rosamond’s dreams it does so in order to point out that her culture has distorted her dreams by forcing them into scenes of violence . . . Jamie’s exploitation of Rosamond is illustrated by his exploitation of nature; he violently breaks the branches of the plum trees and wastes the plums as he takes Rosamond . . . but her voluntary passivity indicates that her culture has shaped her to seek pleasure in danger” (8-9). Rosamond’s desire to be captured by a man is a social ideal that is passed on to children through fairytales. By writing the scene in this way, Welty suggests that society is actually teaching women to put themselves in dangerous situations where men have power over them. The “violation of the land” that occurs when Rosamond is raped shows Jamie’s impulse as a colonizing agent. Merricks continues, “Jamie’s rape of Rosamond parallels the rape of the land that took place in early America” (13). Just as Jamie is colonizing the land of the Natchez Trace through his criminal empire, he is also conquering Rosamond.

Rosamond certainly defies the patriarchal constructs of her society by venturing out into the forest and acculturating with the bandits, but her domestication of the frontier landscape shows that she does not evolve into a woman of true agency; instead, she enters a self-imposed captivity. The bandits are not home when Rosamond arrives and, in the absence of a patriarchal order, she decides to domesticate their space. We learn:

The first thing she did was to put on her own dress, and then having nothing else to do, she rearranged all the furniture in the rooms and then washed all the plates and the big knives the robbers had been eating with. Then she hung everything on pegs that she could lift up, and shoveled away the ashes and got down on her knees and scrubbed the hearth until it shone brightly. She carried in the wood and laid a new fir, and was
just putting the kettle on to boil when she heard a great clatter in the yard, and the robbers were coming home. (80)

By putting on the dress, Rosamond is once again assuming the role of the southern belle. She cleans to fill her boredom, which is reflective of her time with the stepmother. When the bandits arrive home, they think they have been robbed, and when Rosamond announces her presence they want to kill her. Rosamond’s ability to serve as a domestic helper to the bandits is what ultimately saves her life. Rosamond seeks out her rapist, and then lives with him out of wedlock. She makes her own choice to stay in the bandit’s home instead of returning to her father’s house, and she assumes the role of the bandit’s mistress. Although Jamie and Rosamond have a functional relationship in some respects by book’s end, he acquires the money and she maintains the house and fulfills his sexual needs. Merricks states, “Jamie and Rosamond’s relationship is an example of the ideals of patriarchal culture, and Southern culture, taken to an extreme level. Rosamond not only submits to Jamie’s will, but she acts as a servant to all the bandits he lives with” (10). Welty, thus, uses the fairy tale princess trope in conjunction with these grandiose flaws to show that there is no such thing as the perfect southern belle. There are two sides to all human beings, and, although women pretend to be one way in order to be socially accepted, it does not mean that they are as pure and innocent as they claim to be. Jones notes, “Rosamond does hold Jamie sexually captive, but she is the one who is ultimately damaged by their relationship, since she is ruined in a sense that would be unacceptable to society (145). In addition to deconstructing the restrictive gender roles of women, Welty also deconstructs the gender roles of men through an examination of Jamie Lockhart and the men of the bandit culture. Just as southern women are held to certain social codes, so are southern men, but it is the juxtaposition of these gender roles with the bandit culture that allows Welty to comment on the negative impact of colonization on human identity.

Welty establishes a binary between good and evil through her representation of Jamie as both a hero and a villain. When addressing the character of Jamie Lockhart, Welty states, “The Robber Bridegroom, the double character of the title, owes his existence on one side to history-the history of the Natchez Trace outlaws—and on the other side to the Brother’s Grimm” (303). By drawing the character of the Robber Bridegroom from the fairy tale genre, Welty is able to subvert the violent nature of the bandit and his creed by placing him in the context of a
prince. Although Jamie ultimately marries Rosamond, and they rise to a place of status in the new bourgeois merchant class, Jamie is far cry from a fairy tale prince. Welty’s decision to make Jamie a bandit who becomes a merchant suggests that a capitalist American society continues the corruption found in the colonization of the country. Even as the bandit of the woods, he is already endowed with a number of the qualities of the wily merchant. At the beginning of *The Robber Bridegroom*, Jamie is painted as a hero when he saves Clement from an untimely death and offers to share his stolen bounty. Realistically, however, Jamie is a con man who pretends to be virtuous in order to gain Clement’s favor and to profit from his wealth. The violence of this opening act is underscored by humor and satire, but there is a serious undertone to the scene. Welty highlights Mike and Jamie’s quest for identity when the young traveler exclaims, “‘I am Mike Fink! . . . And that is Jamie Lockhart! And not the other way around, neither! You say you do not know who he is—do you not know what he is? He is a—.’ . . . But the yellow-haired stranger smiled at him and said coolly enough, ‘Say who I am forever, but dare to say what I am, and that will be the last breath of any man’” (13). Jamie is a violent man who threatens Mike, but the threat is veiled in comedy. He is willing to defend his name, and he is on a colonizing quest to acquire land. It is only through a certain kind of conquest-silencing Mike, tricking Clement, and winning Rosamond’s affections—that he can ultimately obtain true wealth and freedom. Merrick addresses Jamie’s façade when she says:

This disguise is reminiscent of others in Southern culture, who have blackened their faces in order to look like African-Americans, but I argue that Jamie’s disguise links him to Native Americans instead. When he paints his face, he takes on the violent characteristics that early settlers stereotyped as distinctly Native American, and in a frightening encounter the violent potential in Jamie’s personality is revealed (7).

The bandit is shown to be a teacher of morals when Clement assumes that Jamie has taught Rosamond to be truthful, but the irony is that the bandit simply taught his bride to be a better con artist. Jamie allows Rosamond to acculturate into his lifestyle until she reveals his true identity, and it is the inability to define himself as neither just good nor bad that allows Little Harp, the character based on a real Natchez Trace bandit, to take over as the leader of the bandits.
The violent history of the Natchez Trace outlaws, and the inclusion of Little Harp as a doubling agent for Jamie shows that the bandit not only struggles with his identity, but he struggles with the same colonial impulse of the pioneers who came to the south before him. The doubling of Jamie as a lover and a bandit deconstructs the notion of the southern gentleman since Jamie is no gentleman at all. Jamie the bandit does own the forest and has power as the leader of other criminals, but it is the dark side of his nature that is explored through the inclusion of Little Harp and the interaction between the two men. Merrick suggests, “Jamie’s abhorrence for Little Harp, and his shock at Little Harp’s knowledge about him reveals his anxiety that perhaps he is more like Little Harp than he would like to be” (11). Jamie and Little Harp both hold women captive, and they violate their victims in the same way. Little Harp hires Goat to bring him a woman so that he can emulate Jamie as a bandit, but instead of bringing him the type of woman that he wants, Goat brings him one of his unmarried sisters. The woman is bound, gagged, and held captive by Little Harp, but it is Jamie's assumption that the woman is Rosamond and his treatment of her in captivity that truly reveals how he views and treats women. Little Harp tells Jamie that he bound the woman because she is ugly, but when the woman suggests that her kidnapping would be avenged, Jamie brushes off her comment and laughs at her. He “laughed at the poor creature’s fury, and gave her another peck that she did not know was coming” (109). Not only has Jamie sexually violated Rosamond, but belittles the woman’s reaction to the captivity experience and he violates her as well. The language of this passage suggests that Jamie belittles women and views them as animals, and by calling the violation a peck, the severity of his actions are diminished. When Little Harp wants to carve the girl up with a knife, Jamie steps in and saves her. Although both bandits are portrayed as villains, there is only one time in the text where it is suggested that Jamie is a murderer, and that is when he offers to kill Rosamond. Little Harp, on the other hand, gains his identity from the historical Natchez Trace bandits and is portrayed as someone who “ran about leaving dead bodies over the countryside as thick as flies on the dumplings” (112). In turn, Little Harp reveals Jamie’s identity. He says, “Aha, but I know who you are too . . . Your name is Jamie Lockhart and you are the bandit in the woods, for you have your two faces on together and I see you both” (112). The two men facing one another is the representation of both sides of Jamie Lockhart. Since Little Harp is a bandit, just as Mike Fink was a bandit, he can recognize Jamie’s true identity. When Rosamond
discovers Jamie’s true identity, however, he flees from the bandit’s home and gives Little Harp the opportunity to take over. As the new leader of the bandits, Little Harp decides to kill Rosamond, but, ultimately, a Natchez woman is kidnapped and murdered instead.

Little Harp’s violation and murder of the Natchez woman serves to uncover the veil between reality and the fairy tale romance of Jamie and Rosamond, and it once again reveals the decimation of the indigenous people by colonial settlers. The Natchez woman is kidnapped and brought to the bandit’s home where she is forced to consume the black drink, a Native concoction that induces sleep, and she is left incapacitated at the hands of the infamous Little Harp. The bandits lie to Little Harp and convince him that the woman is Rosamond, which is ironic since Rosamond is known for being a liar. Rosamond, who has arrived back at the home, hides behind a barrel and watches while the Natchez woman is raped and murdered; “But though she thought she would die of fright, Rosamond stayed where she was, still as a mouse . . .” (132). Not only is Rosamond an inactive participant in the murder of another woman, but she fulfills the same role as a bandit. The relationship between the Natchez woman and Little Harp serves as a doubling of the relationship between Jamie and Rosamond, but the language used to describe the death of the Natchez woman is crude and violent. Merricks suggests, “Although Jamie violates Rosamond, the fact that she submits to him allows some readers to see him as a positive character, but by giving Jamie Little Harp as a double, Welty demonstrates the depths of Jamie’s violent tendencies” (11). Little Harp begins his assault on the Natchez woman by chopping off her wedding finger, which falls into Rosamond’s lap, then he throws “… the girl across the long table, among the plates and all . . . with the knives and the forks sticking in them, and flung himself upon her before their eyes” (132). When Jamie comes home moments later and finds the dead woman, he admonishes Little Harp’s actions, but he does not seek justice for the woman by murdering her assailant. The prince would not avenge his wife’s honor by disposing of the man who sought to kill her. Welty speaks to the irony of Jamie and Rosamond’s relationship and suggests, once again, that although there is a veil of romance to their relationship, it is to the detriment of all women to aspire to patriarchal constructs and the social codes of southern womanhood. The gender constructs placed on women by men creates a fictionalized version of what women should be, and it holds them to standards that are detrimental to the well-being of women and society.
In the end, the Native Americans are shown to be the only force of justice when they capture all of the settlers and avenge the death of the Natchez woman. It is once again through the captivity experience that the settlers are able to define themselves. Kreyling states, “The Indians seize their captives to avenge the rape and desecration of their people, symbolically committed when Little Harp, the vicious killer of the Natchez Trace who is based on an historical figure, violates and kills an innocent Indian girl . . . This violation scene is a departure from the fantasy of the fairy tale, and a vivid example of the violence that threads through the story as local legend (37). It is the Natchez’s kidnapping of the pioneers that shows the perpetuation of violence caused by the colonial impulse. The Natives are shown to be a part of nature, and their desire to avenge their people shows the consequence of colonization on white settlers. However, the only true justice served in this scene is the death of Little Harp, who is killed by Jamie. The Natchez are denied their justice because Jamie, Rosamond, and Little Harp are released from captivity before being put to death. It is only Salome, the ultimate villain in the text, who is punished for desecrating the tribe’s beliefs. The cycle of history repeats, and Clement is once again released after the loss of his wife. Colonial society offers a reward for Jamie’s head, but Jamie ultimately escapes his fate. Rosamond and her bridegroom are not held accountable for their actions.

The final captivity scene and the final scene of the book suggest that history is doomed to repeat itself, and there is a negative aspect to the rise of the merchant class, but the restoration of the characters shows the absurdity of a happy ending. *The Robber Bridegroom* has a neat and tidy ending where all of the main characters escape their persecution and are essentially rewarded through the acquisition of wealth. Although Jamie the merchant may appear to be “honest,” it is his experience as a bandit that actually equips him to become a successful merchant. Rosamond and Jamie live happily-ever after with their two twins in New Orleans, and Clement is ultimately reunited with his family. The ending is once again written through Clement’s perspective, and his assumption that Jamie and Rosamond have truly abandoned their bandit ways for a new life is also an ironic twist of the ending. Jamie and Rosamond both try to fulfill the role of honest and upstanding citizens, but their life after captivity is once again portrayed through the perspective of Clement Musgrove. Just as the innkeeper in the beginning of the text appears to be honest, so does the new wealthy couple. Through Clement, Welty suggests that it is only through the introspection of man’s dual nature
that one can change the future, but the merchant class and a capitalist society has the same negative impact on human nature as the colonization of America. The quest for identity and life itself is filled with chaos and violence, and it is only through the family structure that one can be restored to society. Birth, death, and marriage are universal themes that humanize the characters at the end of the novel, but aside from Clement, no one seems to learn anything from the captivity experience. Jamie and Rosamond continue to be greedy colonizers who seek to acquire more wealth and possessions.

The Robber Bridegroom explores one’s struggle with identity and suggests that all human beings have a dual nature that causes internal conflict. Welty places this quest for identity within a historical landscape and within the context of colonization to show the impact of war on mankind. By setting the story on the Natchez Trace, Welty suggests that southern social codes hold men and women to restrictive gender roles, and violence towards women is the consequence of these social constructs. The doubling of characters and the exploration of good and evil allows Welty to deconstruct gender roles, and it is through this theoretical method that she depicts the impact of colonization on the characters themselves. The decision to make the parental figures two dimensional, and the exploration of marital relationships allows the characters to define who they are in the world and who they become as the result of captivity. Welty shows that self-discovery and a knowledge of the past could impact one’s future and break the cycle of history that ultimately holds one captive.

NOTES

1. Grimm Brother’s Fairytales were published in a collection in 1812 and republished multiple times until 1857. They were popularized by adult audiences and contained graphic violence and overt sexuality.

2. In the 1800’s it was common practice for a man’s ear to be removed as a visible sign of his criminal past.

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In a vein similar to that of the wildly popular female captivity narratives of Early American fame, Evelyn Scott mirrors the tropes of captivity in her 1923 memoir, *Escapade*. Throughout her recounting of her time trapped in Brazil with her husband, Scott weaves her narrative around removes stylistically chosen to engender images of the trapped female body within a foreign, imposing space, as popularized by Mary Rowlandson and her contemporaries. However, as the penultimate chapter of *Escapade* draws to a close with the shutting of a train door, the reader finds Scott cheats them of the promise of one final remove to Scott’s freedom and, rather, supplies her audience with impenetrable darkness and a disorienting shadow play. Within the play, we find unfamiliar, fictional characters unseen in the entirety of the six chapters which proceeded and sheer chaos as the play jumps from one seemingly non-sequitur scene to the next. Following darkness, Scott presents the reader with the epitome of the southern gentleman and gentle woman, Aaron and Dina, who the play follows throughout. After amassing great debt and having her life threatened, Dina leaves Aaron to abscond with a Monsieur Renard, who has the appearance of a fox. Aaron drives himself mad in Dina’s absence, building a religion in her honor and positioning himself as the highest authority in the church. However, Dina returns and casts Aaron out into the
wilderness, where his madness only deepens. Eventually, Aaron’s mind shatters and leaves him infantilized.

Many scholars struggle with Scott’s shadow play ending, to the point that many disregard it entirely. In her “Afterword” for Escapade, Dorothy Scura notes states that the “twenty-six page expressionistic fable…seems to have no connection to the rest of the text” (296). Scura, as editor of Evelyn Scott: Recovering a Lost Modernist, also elects to include Mary Papke’s “Players in the Dark,” an article on the context of the shadow play, in the miscellaneous section of her collection, rather than include it under the section pertaining to memoirs; however, I contest that most passionately. Not only is the shadow play relevant to the memoir as a whole, but it also functions as autobiography at times, critiquing her own decisions, as well as those of her husband. Along with that, Scott also wrestles with the inner captivity that she struggles with throughout Escapade: that being the ever looming presence of southern patriarchal ideals and the notion of proper southern womanhood. Scott positions the shadow play in a way that elucidates not only the position of the female body within the patriarchal captivity of southern womanhood, but also the mental degradation of the female mind under this structure. Scott then pairs her criticisms of southern patriarchy with images of battles with herself, as well as her husband.

In order to begin understanding the direction that Scott takes with her strange shadow play, one must first come to grasp the world of exclusivity and misogyny in which Scott lived. From the days of Antebellum and well past American involvement in World War I, the southern United States of America was ruled by the prevailing notion that women and men belonged to separate classes of thought and capability. Rather than be allowed to attend schools that bolstered their young minds with intellectual schools of thought regarding philosophy, mathematics, and the arts, women were sentenced to schools which “emphasized correct female behavior,” according to Anne Firor Scott’s The Southern Lady (7). This need for women to remain ill-educated and dependent upon men permeated throughout many facets of southern life, especially within the doctrine of the Christian church, which provided ample fuel—through biblical scripture—to continue pushing women towards the domestic, rather than the intellectual. “Men found intelligence in woman a quality that in general distressed more than it pleased,” Anne Scott continues, “when they did not openly condemn they treated it with insulting condescension” (8). Under this misogynistic ideology, all southern women who craved intellectual pursuits found the possibili-
ties for mental development severely lacking, and Evelyn Scott was no exception. According to Martha E. Cook in her “Background in Tennessee,” Scott declared that she refused to be a “professional southern belle” at an early age, which constantly sets her identity as an intellectual and “ardent feminist” against her femininity, a battle that Scott fights throughout *Escapade*, especially within its final chapter (60).

Early segments of *Escapade* situate Scott’s life, before living in Brazil, firmly under the influence of southern patriarchal ideology, a stifling ordeal that forms into a captivity of the mind that dominates the psyche of the southern woman. In recounting the reason why she and her common law husband were forced to flee to Brazil, Scott highlights the possibility of being punished under the Mann Act as the direct cause of their flight. The Mann Act, a law originally intended to battle prostitution, prohibited the transporting of minors over state lines for “immoral purposes” (Callard 11). Because of Scott’s age at the time of her elopement with John and the fact that John was already a married man, John’s previous wife creates a push to punish John under the full-extent of the Mann Act. Punishing only John for their relationship removes Evelyn’s culpability for her involvement, which Scott declares “is the usual indignity” as she is not “allowed any decent self-responsibility for [her] acts” (79). Refusing to allow Evelyn to take responsibility for her own actions only further demonstrates the narrow frame in which women could exist in the social consciousness of 1920’s America, thus creating a schism between the real, intellectually free-thinking Scott and the persona of the dependent, impressionable southern belle that society forced upon her. Worse yet, in detailing her experiences with her Uncle Alec, Scott elucidates the prevalence of the scholarly devoid southern woman trope even within her treatment from her own family.² Scott describes her interactions with her uncle as substantively lacking: “Uncle Alec, in whom I always wanted to confide, kept me at a kindly distance…he made a sympathetic jest of my ideas…his sense of responsibility in regard to me related only to my virginity” (77). Her uncle’s lack of support for the overall development demonstrates the deeply ingrained need for maintaining the status quo regarding the imprisonment of the southern female mind even at the familial level and establishes that notion that the southern belle stands solely as a commodity of the flesh, nothing more. Uncle Alec’s participation in the practice of brokering her niece’s body aptly demonstrates and ties Scott’s life back home directly to the archaic patriarchal practice of coverture, highlighting her lack of personhood in her home and under the law. Due to Southern society’s arresting of

*Impenetrable Darkness* 123
any blossoming female minds, Scott highlights the violation of female bodies and minds under the strict codes of white patriarchal influence in the southern United States. Scott, in cataloguing her tribulations in her home country, makes clear the degradation of the female body within the boundaries of the South, though her exploits in Brazil soon prove that her captivity and patriarchal influence diminish little when crossing international demarcations.

Despite her fleeing from the United States with her husband, Scott finds herself still experiencing modes of imprisonment, seemingly indistinguishable from those she once believed to have escaped. John’s wanted status back home prompts his and Scott’s journey to Brazil, though a twist of fate on the world stage, that being World War I, determines Scott’s entrapment in Brazil. Like Mary Rowlandson before her, Scott finds herself in an inescapable foreign space that, just as she experiences back home, fails to value any aspect of Scott outside of her value in flesh. This inability to attain value is due in no small part to the fact that Scott’s limited knowledge of Portuguese allows her no means through which to display mental capital—a violence on Scott’s person that she represents with clear physical ailments upon her body, specifically the disabilities forced upon her during the botched delivery of her son, Jackie. Particularly with images of her pre and post-natal body, Scott demonstrates the damage and warping of the female body that occurs when women are not even allowed governance over the needs of their own bodies. Clear examples of this fact lie in Scott’s experience with Drs. Januario and Beach, whose inability to acknowledge Scott’s words and needs directly result in the disfigurement and torture of her body. During the delivery of her son, Dr. Januario, a local Brazilian doctor, refuses to acknowledge Scott’s pain during the delivery and mishandles Scott’s body to the point that she requires surgery. Later, Dr. Beach, a white missionary, performs the corrective surgery that Scott requires, but also refuses to prescribe any pain medication or listen to her needs as a patient. Despite the regional, cultural, and linguistic differences, both doctors—educated men and symbols of power in their community—dismiss and debilitate Scott just the same, proving that her patriarchal captivity truly is inescapable. Scott’s body, through her description, then becomes a traveling temple to the grotesque institution of patriarchal colonization of the female form. In his article titled “Magnificent Shamelessness,” Tim Edwards explains that “the grotesque female body is both marginalized by the male ideal and spurred to rebellion by this very marginalization,” a rebellion that we see grow in Scott and eventually
manifest into the final chapter of her novel (Edwards 7). As the signifier of her loss of autonomy lies upon her body, Scott manages to gain no reprieve from her entrapment despite bounding from one home to the next as John changes jobs—the image which constitutes the removes of her tale, despite the clear lack of a final remove in the seventh chapter, of an escape to freedom, in Scott’s text.

In naming the final chapter of her memoir “Shadow Play,” Scott alludes to the first shadow play, that being “The Allegory of the Cave” found in Book VII of Plato’s *Republic*, and compares the plight of the philosopher described within to that of the southern woman held captive to the patriarchal bonds of southern womanhood. In Plato’s “The Allegory of the Cave,” Plato utilizes a dialogue between this teacher, Socrates, and his brother, Glaucon, to weave the tale of a mass of men held chained facing a shadow play on one wall of the cave in which they are captive. One man manages to escape his bondage and wanders out of the cave that he has spent his entire life in to see the wonders of the outside world. He notes the disparity between the natural world when compared against the images presented to him and the other captives while held in the cave. Looking to share his discovery, the man, now enlightened, returns to free and illuminate his compatriots. Rather than embrace the ideas presented by the returning man, his fellow detainees instead murder him in cold-blood to avoid embracing the notion that their perception of reality stands flawed due entirely to lack of experience. For Plato, this interchange between the enlightened man and less informed spells the experience of the philosophic mind, specifically when destroying the “cheat” and “illusion” of the façade reality presented in the shadow play (748). Like the darkness found in Plato’s parabolic cave, Scott scripts the genesis of her play in “impenetrable darkness,” followed by images of animals. Scott’s play continues to mirror that of Plato by juxtaposing the removal of Madame Dina, the embodiment of southern womanhood in Scott’s play, from the figures of the shadow play to that of the captive philosopher; however, just as Scott morphs the tale of the cave to demonstrate her ideological stance on southern ideals of femininity, so too does Scott warp many details of the original allegory.

Establishing the image of the southern belle, held captive to white patriarchal norms of southern society, sits entirely in our read of Dina, the woman whose actions shape the entirety of the shadow play’s plot. The play begins with a Madame Dina, the epitome of the southern belle: “beautiful, sensual,” and “sumptuously dressed,” all matters of the mind and independence lying outside the realm of necessity for her
We find Dina sitting at the height of luxury, at dinner with a Monsieur Renard and Mr. Bulle. Renard spends his time engaging in flirtations with Dina, whom we find is presently engaged with another man, Aaron. Dina returns Renard’s advances, all the while warning of Aaron’s “abominable” jealousy (260-1). When Aaron stumbles upon the hidden tryst, Dina begins to beg his forgiveness and be granted a second chance to “prove [her] devotedness,” which Aaron disregards in favor of battling with Renard instead. With Dina’s denied culpability in her betrayal of Aaron, we see early signs of Aaron’s inability to hold Dina accountable or to punish her breaches of trust with anything outside of simply ignoring her. But even this task stands daunting, as Dina already rests upon a socially appointed pedestal. When a swarm of debt collectors assault Aaron’s home in search of Dina, a butler declares that, in seeking to harm Dina, “the brutes attack the establishment of a lady,” proving that not only do the proper southern gentlemen in attendance believe Dina to be a paragon of womanhood, but the lower-class servants in the household believe the very same of Dina’s status. Rather than allow her image as a southern belle to be broken, even in the face of certain death that follows the debt collector’s call to have her head upon the guillotine, Dina holds steadfast in her adherence to the code of southern womanhood, declaring, “better death at the hands of the populace than dishonor later” (263). It is Dina’s adherence to the patriarchal codes that bind her at this moment in the play that, in comparison to the Dina encountered later in the play, make Dina’s transformation into an image that transgresses the codes that she once abided all the more potent.

Scott’s inclusion of animals within her shadow play not only pays homage to Plato’s original detailing of the allegory, but also highlights the baser, animalistic drive of southern men who prescribe to the prevailing idea of southern female dependency on men. Rather than display the animals within her play as merely that, Scott veils the beasts under the guise of proper southern gentlemen. Seated at the table with Madame Dina sits Monsieur Renard, “very elegantly correct, all finesse and sophistication,” bearing the bushy tail and ears of a fox. Alongside Renard is Mr. Bulle, adorned with “fat hairy hands…ornamented with rings,” a low brow, heavy jaw, and “small blunt horns [protruding] from his temples,” mirroring the image of a massive bull. With Monsieur Renard, the audience soon finds the southern gentleman’s penchant for subterfuge, manipulation, and obfuscation behind personal wealth. Rather than battle Aaron outright, as demanded, Renard calls Aaron to “listen to
reason” (262). Renard’s call for reason accounts only for Renard’s sense of reason, a reason that functions solely under Renard’s perceived control of all matters through the power of his personal wealth. In Renard’s symbolic purchase of Dina, we see the southern gentleman’s animalistic drive to own womanhood and put in on display as though it were a trophy. To counter Renard’s suave, Mr. Bulle appears as brutish, symbolizing southern patriarchy’s lack of self-awareness. Mr. Bulle springs to Renard’s aid, declaring that “honor [is] more precious’n blood,” which establishes his position as the southern gentleman’s bull-headed adherence to the codes of honor that have always dictated regional modes of thought: a trait that Scott demonstrates is as destructive as it is weak to any challenge, as a bill collector manages to trump all of his might through merely presenting a red handkerchief (263, 265). In retooling the animal shadows of Plato’s allegory, Scott highlights the baser instincts that lie below the surface of southern patriarchal codes.

By having Dina flee her debtors with Monsieur Renard, Scott takes the ideology surrounding the southern female’s dependency to its logical conclusion, a world in which Aaron stands abandoned in the face of his inability to care for the monster created by the standards enforced upon the southern female and the breaking of the social contract between southern gentleman and southern woman. When bill collectors come for Dina’s head due to her late massive debt, Aaron fails to tend to Dina’s needs, despite their enormous proportions. As Dina’s plight seems most dire, Renard appeases the blood-thristy creditors by tossing gold coins at their feet. Rather than stay with Aaron, whom Dina sees as a failed provider, Dina absconds with Renard. One must view her actions as the ultimate conclusion of the strict social contract enforced upon the southern belle rather than demonizing Dina. Anne Scott reasons that southern women allowed themselves to be subjected to the strain of southern womanhood due to the notion that to “be a lady” was to be “loved,” “respected,” and “supported” (20). Aaron’s inability to tend to the needs of Dina stands as a clear break in the contract which southern patriarchy forced upon the women of the region. Dina’s observance of the broken pact that dictated her every action sends her from the gaze of the play’s audience to a new found enlightenment that forces Dina from the proverbial cave.

Dina’s absence marks the first clear sign that Aaron, who functions as a cipher for Scott’s read of southern white patriarchy, is unable to function without the construct of the proper southern lady to prop up himself. Aaron, as the symbol of white patriarchy, refuses to pay his servants their
fair due for services rendered. In order to reestablish himself within a firm set of power, Aaron initiates the ridiculous scene in which he shrugs off the rule of law, represented by a policeman, ignores his servant’s cries for compensation, and, instead, institutes a religion centered on an altar to the now absent Dina. Curiously, all of the servants and even the policeman begin to dress in Dina’s old clothing and worship her, despite their previously clear disregard for her existence after her debts cause their loss of wages. It is entirely through Aaron’s insistence on the pure divinity of the figure of Dina, of southern womanhood, that the figure of Dina, rather than the Dina of reality, is elevated to mass reverence. However, Aaron also utilizes his elevation of Dina to reinstate his own power, as he stations himself at the head of the religion he crafts around Dina, coaxing the lady’s maid into declaring that she “think[s] [Aaron] must be God” (278). This regarding Aaron as a religious force stems from his, and white patriarchy’s, power to make the illusion of southern womanhood appear to be reality. It is his crafting of realities, despite their falsity, that gives Aaron the appearance of divine power; however, this power to detain the image of woman only stands as long as woman allows her role to continue being dictated by white patriarchal systems: an arrangement that Dina’s return breaks outright.

Dina’s godlike return and disownment of Aaron and his lifestyle condemns the widely upheld practice of denying the southern woman agency, mental growth, and loyalty in the face of the broken social contract between Dina and Aaron. After Dina’s departure in the arms of Monsieur Renard, Aaron’s world crumbles without his previously reliable social structure, that being one focused on the unrealistic expectations and limiting of southern womanhood. After Aaron sings Dina’s praises, yet choses to kiss a water sprite at the shrine for Dina, Dina’s face emerges from the wall over the altar. In biblical fashion, Dina proclaims, “from my breast you were fed and yet you have denied me,” which serves as a condemnation of the faithlessness of white patriarchal powers. Despite his proclamations of faithfulness to Madame Dina, Aaron obliterates any doubt that he, as well as patriarchy, stand only in self-service. Any amount of elevation that the system provides to women functions only to control the opposite sex through unrealistic standards and thereby empowers the lacking egos of men who prescribe to the idea of southern womanhood, like Aaron. Dina’s return symbolizes the proverbial return of the philosopher to Plato’s cave, as she now recognizes the inner-workings of the patriarchal system that once she was subjected. Rather than forming an attack against the returning philosopher who seeks to
dismantle his deeply-believed world views, Aaron’s psyche stands demolished in the face of a combatant that his ideology has crafted to not only be subservient and meek-minded, but also untouchable. Thanks in no small part to Aaron’s elevating of Dina to a religious stature in the face of his subordinates and, importantly, the law, Aaron locates himself in a position unable to retaliate, thus disposing him of his false divinity. Thus, Aaron’s powerlessness in the face of patriarchy’s creation allows him to be cast out into the wilderness by Dina.

In Aaron’s exile, he encounters an ape who questions the purpose of Aaron, and with him patriarchal entities, while highlighting the mental frailty patriarchal delusions create in their proponents. Aaron finds himself banished to a great wood, devoid of any of his servants or the constructions of religion and power he produced. An ape springs upon Aaron, who states that he is “lost” and in need of direction because does not know where he wishes to go. The desperation of Aaron’s request for guidance from an animal of the forest demonstrates the fact that, regardless of white patriarchal efforts, men are not masters of the universe and the destruction of their illusions of power render them invalid, directionless entities. The ape, after surveying Aaron, surmises that Aaron “doesn’t belong in [the ape’s] class at all” due to his lack of a tail, wings, sharp teeth, or survival strength (281-2). Aaron’s lack of real survival qualities indicates the weakness that stems from the coddling nature of patriarchal structures, which deceptively allow men of social stature to avoid evolving. In fact, the only strength that Aaron appears to hold over the ape lies in his ability to deceive himself with phantasms of his own creation, which the ape declares as a waste of energy, as nothing tangible comes from creating such images.

At the end of Aaron’s short stay with the ape, Aaron enjoins himself into chasing apparitions of Madame Dina that begin to warp and destroy the remainder of his sanity, thus demonstrating the self-destruction of the southern gentleman without the guidance of patriarchal codes forced upon women within their lives. Furthering his encounters with images of the divine female, Aaron suffers from a dream similar to that of Jacob, yet his vision fails to comfort. He dreams of the lady’s maid, who once before declared him God, with Christ’s stigmata and a crown of thorns, holding up a baby for all to see. This image terrifies Aaron, as it signifies the sacrifice that women beholden to servitude to men make. The horror of the notion of sacrifice lies in the autonomy it grants in the act, empowering the female form and, importantly, demonstrating that Aaron’s power as “God” lacked inherence, as the lady’s maid granted the
power to him rather than produced through observation of truth. As Aaron’s power becomes less intrinsic, his dread and ghastly imaginations become more prevalent.

Aaron awakes from his dream to chase after another apparition of Dina, which soon supplies the final devastating crack in Aaron’s psyche, leaving the constructions of patriarchal order at the mercy of the enlightened female. Aaron witnesses the constantly haunting face of Dina once more, this time in the form of unhewn marble, which takes the form of a “dead white…statue of a girl, virginal and delicate.” In her work *Tomorrow is Another Day*, when speaking on the unrealistic and often paradoxical requirements of subscribing one’s self to the values of southern womanhood, Anne G. Jones notes: “the image wearing Dixie’s Diadem,” that being the metaphorical crown worn by the proper southern belle, “is not a human being; it is a marble statue, beautiful and silent, eternally inspiring…rather than a person, [she] is a personification, effectively only if she works in other’s imaginations” (4). The formation of the specter from marble stands as an embodiment of this ideal, signifying not only how unnatural, unhuman sculpturesque perceptions of women are, but also the fragility of the construction itself. This otherworldly image presents itself veiled to Aaron, who pursues her throughout the forest, shouting “Galatea!” (283). Through alluding to *Pygmalion*, Scott illustrates the unrealistic, hollow ideals set for women through Aaron’s patriarchal ideologies, while also hinting at Aaron’s narcissistically reinforced drive to create woman in his image. This concept further unpacks with Aaron’s eventual capture of his “Galatea,” whom he unveils to have his face atop the body of a woman, signifying the southern patriarchal desire to supplant the personhood of women with the construction of the southern belle born in the imaginations of men.

In his final interaction with Dina, Aaron witnesses the death of his way of life through the return of the enlightened female as she unveils the lifeless form of woman under the governance of southern patriarchy and the narrowed existence of men in their enforcement of this social construction. From among the trees, Aaron witnesses the reappearance of Madame Dina, to whom he immediately calls out. To Aaron’s horror, the Dina who turns towards him no longer possesses the features of a woman, but rather her face “shows a bare skull, eyeless sockets and fleshless cheeks.” The macabre scene of Dina’s final return marks the ultimate product of the captivity of the female form forced to surrender her existence to the captivity known as southern womanhood, that being the withering of woman away to nothing but a skeletal figment of herself.
As Scott demonstrates, southern womanhood negates the possibility of developing fully formed women; however, Scott also postulates that patriarchal ideology takes a similar effect with the very men who enforce its codes. Solidifying this idea, Scott tortures Aaron with a multitude of his doppelgangers. When describing Aaron’s double’s eyes “mocking [Aaron] in silence” and their derisive laughter, Scott displays the true nature of patriarchy: that being a system that does not promote natural human social structures, but rather the perpetuation of male dominance and the continuation of a singular, parasitic image of masculinity (284). Because Dina’s return incites the eventual revelations that appear to Aaron, the skeletal image of Dina also represents the role great female thinkers, who escaped the bonds of prescribed womanhood, play in the demise of the patriarchy.

In the conclusion of “Shadow Play,” Scott posits the image of an infantilized Aaron in the face of Dina’s destruction of the patriarchal societal structures that functioned at the expense of female development and elevated the southern man to the position of master. After Aaron collapses during his encounter with his clones, the kitchen maid Bessie reenters the play—her face being “old and wan” with gray hair falling to her shoulders. Two men, clearly part of the theater staff yet wearing fake angel’s wings, bring a “white iron crib” large enough to fit a man onto the stage. The strange props engender a cognitive dissonance for the reader, breaking any sense of suspended disbelief that may exist and reminding the viewer that the shadow play is a construction of the reality that we all understand. After the crib is situated, Bessie leads Aaron to rest within it and sings a haunting song to soothe the distressed Aaron to sleep. She sings of “innocent” tigers, lambs, and serpents all living at peace in the world, but then introduces “[her] baby.” This baby functions as a Christ figure, standing upon a cloud delivering judgement upon saint and sinner alike. The appearance of this divine child shifts the song towards violence, detailing the tiger’s slaughter of the lamb and the serpent’s capture of a “weak bird,” pointing to the “tiger’s creep” and “serpent’s start” as the only innocent qualities that remain exemplifies the deception that the young, white male ruler engenders. Just as many other white males raised in southern patriarchy, the child Bessie sings of causes only destruction and duplicity in the world, yet “[stands] glorified” despite the chaos he creates (285-6). By having Aaron climb into a crib at the behest of Bessie, Scott infantilizes the patriarchy that detains her and juxtaposes it with the cataclysmic image of the Christ image in Bessie’s song.
Curiously, though Scott clearly indicts southern patriarchy throughout the play, by having Bessie lull Aaron off to sleep with images that speak of the glorification of that system, Scott retains the status quo of patriarchal norms, which mirrors the real-life philosophical struggles of Scott. Following the conclusion of Bessie's song, Scott ends the play, and her thinly veiled memoir, with an image of “silence and darkness, as it was in the beginning” (286). This primordial darkness mirrors that of the “impenetrable darkness” that began Chapter VII, but also brings the reader back to the beginning of the text, in which Scott watches over her sleeping husband in silence so as to not wake him (261, 1). Not only does the play’s conclusion hint at the cyclical abuses of women under southern patriarchy, but also ties the characters and events of the play to that of Scott’s experiences in reality. Within the play, Scott inserts herself as not only an onlooker, but also an active participant, placing herself into the role of the returned Dina and the aged Bessie. Early within the play, Scott mentions that “I,” meaning Scott herself, “can hear the swishing of [Dina’s] train,” an indicator that Scott sits amongst those viewing the play, most likely from a directorial seat, as “Shadow Play” is as much autobiographical as it is fantastical (262). The retuned Dina symbolizes Scott’s realization of and rebellion against the patriarchal oppression she found herself subjected to at home and abroad. Ultimately, Scott’s projection onto Bessie stands most striking due to her aid in perpetuating the patriarchal system at work against her as well as her support of her husband’s delusional behavior. Particularly evident when comparing John to Aaron, we find many similarities between the two men. The starkest comparison between the two men lies in their actions in the face of disempowerment. Not unlike Aaron, John (Cyril) began to think of himself as a great-spiritual mind shortly after the harrowing experience the family underwent during their time running the failed ranch in Cercadinho, an experience John described as the “joys of feudalism.” After John began reading “Plato and the New Testament,” according to Callard, he “became a Christian by conviction, aware of the irony that his work enabled other Christians to kill one another” (29-30). Through tired, weary Bessie, Scott finally lays her conflict with John to rest—finally surrendering to the delusions he produced.

Through a masterful blending of modernist stylings, autobiography, and social critique, Scott’s “Shadow Play” remains elusive, even under great scrutiny. In setting her final chapter in darkness, Scott produces a dual commentary. In typical modernist fashion, as described by Mary Papke in her “Players in the Dark,” Scott “remains fettered by the con-
tingencies of history,” so aptly demonstrated by the nightscape realm that perpetuates the patriarchal captivity of her shadow play (185). However, Scott’s primordial darkness, despite the horrors that transpired within, contains the promise of eventually dawn and the beginning of time anew.

NOTES

1. Rowlandson’s seminal text The Sovereignty and Goodness of God established the genre of the white female Native American captivity narrative, recounting her captivity under a group of Native Americans. Told in the form of removes, or mini-odysseys from one place of residence with her captor to another, Rowlandson set many trends that would continue throughout the growing genre of women’s captivity narratives.

2. Though Escapade is autobiographical, Scott assigns her family members with aliases: Uncle Alec being her father, Nannette, her mother; John, her husband Cyril Kay-Scott; and Jackie, her son Creighton.

WORKS CITED


About the Contributors

Patrick Attaway is an English major with a creative writing minor. Though he originally intended to major in Music with an emphasis on classical guitar, he chose English due to his love of literature and writing. In 2013, he read “No Man to Tie Them Down,” an essay on Kate Chopin’s The Awakening and Adrienne Shelly’s Waitress at the UWG Undergraduate Conference. Thus, his interests lie in gender studies. Patrick wishes to acknowledge Lorraine Snaith, Bonnie Jett-Adams, Rebecca Harrison, and David Newton for their guidance and support during his time at UWG.

Jennifer Bolden is a senior at the University of West Georgia majoring in English with a concentration in Secondary Education. After college, her goals are to become a high school composition or creative writing teacher and attend graduate school in Atlanta. Her academic interests include British literature, contemporary American literature, and creative writing. Her love for reading novels and writing short fiction gave her the desire to pursue a degree. She has been married to her loving and supportive husband for nine years and has a beautiful, sweet two-year-old daughter. The English department has helped her grow tremendously as a writer during her time at college.

Jody Cook plans to graduate in Fall 2016 with a major in English and concentration in secondary education. He is the current sitting Vice President of Events for UWG’s chapter of the NSCS and relishes taking part in the outreach opportunities held by the organization. Jody would like to thank all of the wonderful friends he has made in UWG’s English program for always being there when the tides rise, his family for supporting his dream to make a difference in his student’s lives, and the amazing UWG English faculty for keeping him
afloat throughout his time in the program. Though unsure where life will, ultimately, guide him, he is certain everything will turn out alright.

**LaKeisha Davis** is an English major with a passion for social change. She plans to pursue a master’s in public administration upon her graduation from the University of West Georgia. She has big plans to change the world, improving it one community at a time. Her future goals include working as an urban city planner and starting her own non-profit organization to help the disenfranchised youth of rural and urban areas. LaKeisha would like to thank her family and friends for always believing in her and for their constant support.

**Olivia McGregor** is a senior majoring in English and minoring in German. She hopes to go to graduate school to get her M.A. in Library Science. Olivia presented her paper on the effects of wartime othering in HBO’s *Band of Brothers* mini-series at the University of West Georgia’s English undergraduate research conference in Fall 2015. She tends to focus her critical essays on oppression and subversion of systems of power with an emphasis on how oppression dictates and informs the actions and mentalities of characters in a given text. Olivia is grateful for all of the support she has received from her professors in the English department and from her family and friends. She is thankful to God for the opportunity to study at UWG and for the encouragement of her closest family and friends.

**Sara Pate** will graduate in Spring 2016 with a degree in English education. Once graduated, she plans to teach middle school and pursue a Masters in Special Education. In time, she would also like to obtain K-12 certification, so she can open an orphanage for all ages. She would like to thank her mother, close friends, and professors for believing in her when she failed to do so.
Julia Powell is completing a major in English and a minor in Business Administration. She is set to graduate in the fall of 2015. She has been a member of the UWG Honor’s College for four years and a member of the UWG saxophone ensemble for three years. Julia recently presented her work on horror film studies at the UWG English Undergraduate Research Conference. She is also an editor on LURE Magazine (Literary Undergraduate Research in English). She hopes to go into a career in technical writing. Julia remains most grateful to the Honors College for awarding her with the Presidential Scholarship for 3 consecutive years. Julia would like to thank all the professors and fellow students she has had the pleasure of working with over the last 4 years.

Margie Weiss is an undergraduate English major and Spanish minor who likes to read, write, watch crime dramas, and listen to music. She loves history, psychology, and language studies. After a long career as a retail employee, she has moved on to the new field of library science. It is her desire to one day teach English to non-native speakers, and her long-term dream is to create a language program that could be easily implemented into corporate retail environments. In addition to her professional goals, Margie has several personal goals. She would like to write one meaningful novel, take a vacation to France, complete a master’s thesis, and someday have a family of her own. In addition to thanking her family for their unconditional support during the undergraduate degree, she would like to thank and recognize the professors in the department who encouraged her to stick with the major, return to the program, and complete her studies.