

## A Legacy of Female Imagination: Lydia Maria Child and the Tradition of Indian Captivity Narrative

*Hisayo OGUSHI\**

The rise of the American romance often inspires controversy, but the origins of the genre can safely be traced at least as far back as the American Puritans, and in particular to early Puritan experiences of Native Americans and the American wilderness. In this context, the American romance is one of the earliest American discourses which is rooted in the racial and cultural differences of the Puritans as New World immigrants and the Native Americans whose territories they invaded. Puritan writers' fears not only of physical danger but also of racial transgressions, such as miscegenation, inspired the launch of the Indian captivity narrative, a seminal romance subgenre, characterized by ardent depictions of Indian savagery and the moral challenges it presented to the Puritans.

The fate of the Indians' captives seems to be represented in typical captivity narrative style in Lydia Maria Child's nineteenth-century romance, *Hobomok: A Tale of Early Times by an American*, published anonymously in 1824: "The captives were placed in an enclosed piece of public land, and a guard of thirty men set over them" (41). The description of white captives surrounded by savage Indians is characteristic of the Indian captivity narrative; but although Lydia Maria Child was merely twenty-two years old when *Hobomok* was published, her narrative

---

Copyright © 2004 Hisayo Ogushi. All rights reserved. This work may be used, with this notice included, for noncommercial purposes. No copies of this work may be distributed, electronically or otherwise, in whole or in part, without permission from the author.

\*Assistant Professor, Keio University

soon departs from the conventions of the genre, demanding that we reconsider stereotypical images of captivity as well as the relationship of ethnicity and gender.

In *Hobomok*, Child describes an interracial marriage between a white woman and an Indian man. It is remarkable that in early nineteenth-century America Child would approach the theme of interracial marriage in a positive light, and indeed *Hobomok* aroused anger and disgust in its readers and reviewers. The nearly hysterical condemnation which greeted *Hobomok* may be understood in view of the spirit of the times, which in turn offers insight into those essential problematic elements of the captivity narrative which influenced *Hobomok* so strongly.

This essay will examine the Indian captivity narrative and its influence on the rise of the American romance, and will specifically clarify how the romance novels of Lydia Maria Child were direct descendants of Puritan women writers. In the process, this essay will shed light on Child's own views on ethnicity and femininity.

### **The Significance of the Indian Captivity Narrative**

Narratives of captivity and escape have played a role in world literature for as long as conflict and warfare have existed, but the Indian captivity narrative as a genre has played an especially important role in American literary history.<sup>1</sup> The Puritan immigrants from England came to the New World to fulfill a mission, the construction of "a city upon a hill" as John Winthrop exclaims in his "A Model of Christian Charity," upon which they could pursue a religious life unimpeded. However, in the New World the Puritans found their plans threatened by the American Indians, with some of whom they found it difficult to live in harmony. The Indians not only attacked Puritan villages, but also captured white people and spirited them away to Indian society.<sup>2</sup>

Since the Puritans came to America for religious purposes, their narratives of Indian captivity were written as variations on the conversion narratives which commonly appeared in the seventeenth century. These narratives were intended to promote Puritan solidarity by modeling the preservation of piety in the face of suffering. The Indian captivity narrative was originally a variation of the conversion narrative in which white immigrants recount autobiographically how they were attacked and captured by the Indians, how they maintained their faith in God despite the hardships they endured, and then how they attributed to God's glory their escape from Indian society. The captivity narrative was well-

suiting as a genre to asserting the moral superiority of white Puritans because it was invariably cast within a clearly binary framework: suffering whites contrasted with brutal savages.

Celebrated ministers such as Increase Mather and Cotton Mather made positive use of the conversion narrative by emphasizing its religious aspects. To the Mathers, captivity experiences played the role of punishment in God's plan by which the community that is to be blessed by God is purified. The rhetoric which they brought to bear on conversion narratives is the same as that of the jeremiads; Indian captivity was interpreted as a religious allegory for the Puritans' rediscovery of God's omnipotence and their repentance in the wilderness: "Living through the experience and returning home was considered a sign of divine favor" (Derounian-Stodola 19). Given this perspective, it was natural for the ministers to use these spiritual autobiographies as sermon topics. The Indian captivity narrative, thus, was employed to promote piety and solidarity in the white community.

However, as the captivity narrative developed, it gradually lost its religious disposition, until by the nineteenth century it had been transformed into a more secular minor genre of romance which colonial era clergymen such as Increase Mather or Cotton Mather would never have accepted. In the course of this transformation, the Indian captivity narrative was submerged into sensational and sentimental fiction through its frequent appearance in "the cheap, ephemeral booklets" called chapbooks, which were published throughout the eighteenth and the nineteenth century (Neuberg 81). Indian captivity narratives contributed much to the formation of the chapbook tradition and were often reprinted.

Richard VanDerBeets observes that the Indian captivity narrative essentially portrays cultural adaptation. The narrative typically follows "the archetypal initiate" through a basic pattern of "Separation (abduction), Transformation (ordeal, accommodation, and adoption), and Return (escape, release, or redemption)" (562). Although VanDerBeets makes reference to the captives' gradual adjustment to Indian society, which had certainly not been a focus of attention in the colonial era, he ultimately reduces this aspect to the "fundamental truths of experience" (562), by which VanDerBeets indicates that the Indian captivity narrative is an archetype of human experience, which could be applied and recreated in the course of literature.

Indeed this is one conclusion which may be drawn, but like the patriarchal Puritan ministers, VanDerBeets seems to have overlooked an

essential aspect of the captivity narrative. “Transformation,” in VanDerBeets’s own terms of “ordeal, accommodation, and adoption,” also applies to the theme of self-fashioning, as we shall examine in the works of Mary Rowlandson, Elizabeth Hanson, Hannah Swarton and Hannah Dustan. Interestingly, the traditional theme of self-fashioning in American literature, which was in many respects antithetical to Puritan ideology, appears to derive from these women writers. As Tara Fitzpatrick points out, “in a twist on the conventional image of an untethered man conquering a ‘virgin’ wilderness, the American rhetoric of self-creation in these Puritan captivity narratives issued predominantly from women” (3).

**Mary White Rowlandson:  
First Self-Fashioner of American Female Identity**

It is worth noting that the earliest Indian captivity narrative was written by a woman, Mary Rowlandson. The story of this white woman’s captivity by savage Indians gained increasing popularity as it was retold in chapbooks, exerting a strong influence on the tradition of sensational fiction. It seems safe to relate the frequent appearance of Indians in nineteenth-century fiction to the secularization which the Indian captivity narrative underwent in surviving in chapbook form.<sup>3</sup>

It is surprising not only that Mary Rowlandson wrote the first Puritan captivity narrative to defend her own purity in a society which valued selflessness, but also that she wrote as a woman in a Western culture in which men have long prevented women from attempting the pen (Gilbert and Guber 12). However, the complex interrelationship for female writers of self-fashioning and wilderness provided fertile ground for both writing and publication of her adoption of captivity narrative.

According to Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, it was Increase Mather who persuaded Rowlandson to publish her narrative, “The Sovereignty and Goodness of God,” which was first intended for private circulation (98). It seems probable that Mather liked Rowlandson’s narrative for its inclusion of more than sixty references to the Testaments, as well as its explicit descriptions of God as the source of her endurance throughout her sufferings. In other words, Derounian argues that the contribution of Rowlandson’s private experience to the religious community was highly appreciated by the male clergy.

Teresa A. Toulouse, on the contrary, reveals that beyond the narrative itself and Rowlandson’s willingness to publish, Rowlandson was a gen-

tlewoman whose husband was a minister and whose father was one of the wealthiest men in Lancaster (656), factors which may also have enhanced both the acceptability and reception of her story.<sup>4</sup> Toulouse's explanation implies that in addition to the intended contribution of her captivity narrative to the spiritual aims of the male clergy, it is no wonder that Rowlandson also addressed herself to particularly female concerns as well. For example, she clearly strove to express her purity of body as well as that of her spirit.

Alden T. Vaughan and Edward W. Clark framed this issue as follows: "Although no ethnological evidence indicates that northeastern Indians ever raped women prisoners, as Plains Indians sometimes did, female captives sometimes felt a need to defend their sexual conduct" (14). Rowlandson needs to assert her sexual purity, and does so in the last part of her narrative:

I have been in the midst of those roaring lions and savage bears that feared neither God nor man nor the devil, by night and day, alone in company, sleeping all sorts together, and yet not one of them ever offered me the least abuse of unchastity to me in word or action. (70)

In this passage, Rowlandson defends herself as a woman by sharing her private proclamation that she was never sexually offended by the Indians—that the Indians contaminated neither her body nor her spirit. In short, Rowlandson wants to clarify that she was not Indianized.

Rowlandson's own writing, however, clearly contradicts her intentions on this point, in that it contains a detailed description of her adoption of the Indians' way of life to survive. Toulouse observes that Rowlandson uses skills from her previous life in the course of adopting an Indian lifestyle:

If her [Rowlandson's] affliction of body denotes spiritual specialness and is a "sign" that she has not been spiritually "indianized," [. . .] her often noted ability to deal with her afflictions—to knit, sew, barter, beg and to survive on the land just as well as captors—offers another reading of the meaning of affliction. A Puritan woman is here shown capable of indeed being 'indianized'—on a secular level. (670–71)

The most conspicuous example of Rowlandson's Indianization is found in her description of foods. Rowlandson describes her gradual adoption of the Indian diet as follows:

The first week of my being among them I hardly ate anything; the second

week, I found my stomach grow very faint for want of something; and yet it was very hard to get down their filthy trash. But the third week, though I could think how formerly stomach would turn against this or that and I could starve and die before I could eat such things, yet they were sweet and savory to my taste. (44)

Rowlandson acquires and accepts an Indianized taste for such fare as corn and ground nuts, which she gathers alongside the Indians. Her sense of taste is changed, and moreover, her attitude towards eating is also changed.

Let us compare the following two quotations by way of examining this transformation:

I asked him [an Indian] to give me a piece [of horse liver]. "What," says he, "can you eat horse liver?" I told him I would try if he would give a piece, which he did, and I laid it on the coals to roast, but before it was half ready they got half of it away from me so that I was fain to take the rest and eat it as it was with the blood about my mouth, and yet a savory bit it was to me [. . .]. (45)

Rowlandson has clearly learned that she cannot persist in her previous attitudes towards food without facing starvation.

The squaw was boiling horses' feet; then she cut me off a little piece and gave one of the English children a piece also. Being very hungry, I had quickly eat up mine, but the child could not bite it, it was so tough and sinewy but lay sucking, gnawing, chewing, and slobbering of it in the mouth and hand. Then I took it of the child and ate it myself and savory it was to my taste. (60)

In these examples Rowlandson acts towards the English child exactly as the Indians did towards her: she deprived a poor child of food she had previously regarded "filthy," which clearly suggests her Indianization.

Yet another example of Rowlandson's Indianization may be found in the manner of her escape; Rowlandson employed the Indian barter system to purchase her freedom, exchanging herself for twenty pounds, which she found while she was with the Indians. Thus, in spite of her denial of being Indianized, her narrative demonstrates her adaptation into the Indian society to survive.

Annette Kolodny acutely observes that without the Indians, Rowlandson could not have survived in the wilderness (19). Fitzpatrick concludes that it was only in the wilderness that Rowlandson could achieve a self-enlightenment that had been repressed by Puritan society

(12). Moreover, Rowlandson succeeded in life among the Indians specifically because she was a woman; her skills in sewing and knitting, both specifically feminine crafts in Puritan society, were instrumental in her assimilation into Indian society. This aspect of Rowlandson's and other female captivities reveal the close relationship between femininity and Indianization; male captives such as John Williams seldom managed to adjust to Indian society, expressing in their narratives unbridled Indian hatred.

### **Hannah Dustan: Woman of Legend**

Rowlandson was not the only Puritan woman to be Indianized. Both Hannah Swarton and Elizabeth Hanson also more or less adopted an Indian way of life, despite their arguments that it was piety which saved them. Hannah Swarton, for example, describes marked changes in her eating habits in the wilderness, including the eating of groundnuts, weed roots, and even dogs' flesh to avoid starvation. Elizabeth Hanson, who was forbidden to wash off and dispose of the entrails of a beaver she had cleaned, simply ate them out of intense hunger; Hanson also followed the Indian practice of thinning milk with water to feed her baby. Furthermore, both Swarton and Hanson's children remained with the Indians even after their mothers returned to Puritan society.

Yet none would surpass Hannah Dustan in terms of Indianization. According to Cotton Mather's short but appalling report, "A Narrative of Hannah Dustan's Notable Deliverance from Captivity," Indians "dashed out the brains of [Dustan's] infant against a tree" (163) and captured Dustan, who has "lain-in about a week" (162). Unlike Rowlandson and other captives, Dustan did not pursue a strategy of docile adaptation to the Indian society. Instead, this bold woman Indianized herself by killing ten Indians while they were asleep, scalping them in the Indian manner of revenge (and perhaps ironically earning a reward of fifty pounds per scalp from the Massachusetts Colony).

In *Regeneration through Violence*, Richard Slotkin explains Dustan's actions as resulting from a process of Indianization:

[A]s the case of Mrs. Rowlandson's demonstrates, even the most pious returned captives acquired altered outlooks on the nature of the wilderness and the Indians [. . .]. They [returned captives] became, to some extent, symbolic amalgams of Indian and white characters; [. . .]. Even Hannah Dustan killed and scalped her former captors in the Indian manner. (114)

Mather himself justifies Dustan's murderous acts with a similar line of reasoning: "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" (164). Though Mather's defense of Dustan clearly aims to arouse Indian hatred among whites, it is premised nonetheless on Dustan's Indianization, for all that Homi Bhabha might say that her particular act of mimesis was "not quite."<sup>5</sup>

As Dustan's retaliatory killing of Indians makes clear, no one can say who is the assailant and who is the victim in the captivity narrative. The Indians were certainly her victims, though in captivity narratives by whites it was the Indians who captured white victims. Yet predating the Puritan captivity narrative is the extensive history of Indians who were captured by the Spanish. Then as now Indians and Whites continue to realign a structure which has undergone countless realignments. Ultimately, there is no order in captivity narrative; as Cotton Mather so aptly stated, nobody is secured by law because there is no law in the wilderness. It is precisely on this ground that the genre of captivity narrative itself revolves around lawlessness.

The lawlessness of the captivity narrative brings to mind the views of Jean Bethke Elshtain in *Woman and War*. Elshtain concludes that women's violence rises specifically when the social order is disturbed.

Collective male action can be moralized, can take place within the boundaries of the culturally sanctioned. Outside a horizon, fused with the story of war/politics, female violence is what happens when politics breaks down into riots, revolutions, or any anarchy: when things are out of control. (170)

According to Elshtain, it is in a state of chaos that the female self is created; when the order which governs the male world becomes corrupt, the inevitable intrusion of chaos creates space for women. Dustan's revenge occurred in such a feminine space, a place in which the judgment of men did not apply because Puritan patriarchal standards and laws had no jurisdiction.<sup>6</sup> It is in the wilderness that women's self-fashioning is achieved.

The story of this bold woman was often retold in the nineteenth century, in works including "The Mother's Revenge" (1831) by John Greenleaf Whittier, "The Duston Family" (1836) by Nathaniel Hawthorne, or *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849) by Henry David Thoreau. Nonetheless, Mrs. Dustan has never been accepted as a legendary frontier figure on the order of Daniel Boone, because

she was essentially an anarchist transgressing the male social order. Hawthorne, for example, treats Dustan's vengeful behavior as if she were a horrific mad mother:

Hark! That low moan, as of one in a troubled dream—it told a warrior's death pang! Another!—Another!—and the third half-uttered groan was from a woman's lips. But, Oh, the children! Their skin are red; yet spare them, Hannah Duston [*sic*], spare those seven little ones, for the sake of the seven that have fed at your own breast. "Seven," quoth Mrs. Duston to herself. "Eight children have I borne—and where are the seven and where are the eighth!" The thought nerves her arm; and the copper coloured babes slept the same dead sleep with their Indian mothers. (43)

For Hawthorne, Dustan was an "awful woman" (45), in contrast to her "tender hearted, yet valiant" husband who narrowly escaped from the Indians without hurting anybody (45). In the same vein, Thoreau locates the anecdote of Dustan emphatically in the past, writing "those times seem more remote than the dark age" (53).

After forming her self in the wilderness, Hannah Dustan can no longer be viewed as acceptable in terms of male-delineated social standards; Hawthorne's typically negative characterization of Dustan suggests that she is far from the feminine ideal desirable to men, not only because she is aggressive but also because she is a self-made woman. Yet Dustan's narrative proves that women's selves emerge in the wilderness, and it might further be argued that women in the seventeenth century require captivity in order to liberate themselves from cultural and social bondage through violence.

### ***Hobomok* as a Reverse Captivity Narrative**

The Indian captivity narrative survived into the nineteenth century in numerous works of sensational fiction.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the original seventeenth-century captivity narrative, which encouraged Indian hatred, nineteenth-century fictions romanticized the Indians as noble savages.<sup>8</sup> Lydia Maria Child's first romance, *Hobomok* (1824), also presents sympathetic stereotypes of Indians, yet the Indian that Child created in her romance behaves with far greater passion than reviewers or ordinary readers of her time expected: the Indian hero impregnates a white heroine. While Mary White Rowlandson wrote and published her captivity narrative as a proclamation of her purity, Child provoked her reviewers and readers with a romance about mixing races.

*Hobomok* is a historical novel about Puritan society set in Naumkeak (Salem), Massachusetts circa 1629. In this novel, the protagonist, Mary Conant, leaves behind a life on her rich grandfather's English manor to journey to the New World with her sick mother in search of the religious freedom which her father, Roger Conant, desires for his family. In those days, the Indians often raided the colonists, but thanks to Hobomok, an Indian who acted as an intermediary, the whites and the Indians secured peace. As the novel develops, Hobomok forms a secret love for Mary, despite his awareness that she loves Charles Brown.

Brown, however, is a young Episcopalian whom Roger Conant hates and whose marriage to Mary he opposes. Since Charles refuses to convert to Puritanism, he is ordered by the Governor to return to Britain. Charles, however, boards a ship for India, and the news soon arrives in Naumkeak that the ship has sunk in a storm. Along with the death of Mary's mother, the news of Charles's death drives Mary into "a bewilderment of despair that almost amounted to insanity" (120), and she finally decides to marry Hobomok and thereby gives a great despair to her father. Three years later Mary bears Hobomok a son. However, Charles has in fact survived the shipwreck, and returns to Naumkeak only to find that Mary is the wife of Hobomok. Knowing Mary's feelings, Hobomok leaves her forever and returns to the deep forest. Little Hobomok is raised in white society, growing up to attend Cambridge University.

Child was not the first writer to deal with a close relationship between an Indian and a white. For example, James Wallis Eastburn's epic poem *Yamoyden: a Tale of the War of King Philip*, in Six Cantos narrates a tale of the tragic love of an Indian man, Yamoyden, and a white maiden, Nora, both of whom die in King Philip's war. This popular epic won a favorable review in *North American Review* in 1821, which directly inspired Child to write *Hobomok*. In this twenty-two-page review of *Yamoyden*, the anonymous reviewer attested: "This is one of the most considerable attempts in the way of poetry, which have been made in this country" (466).

*Hobomok* was also highly praised in some reviews, but never wholeheartedly. One anonymous reviewer emphasized the unnaturalness of this romance (262–63), and another review, by Jared Sparks, criticized the novel with the observation that not all readers would approve of it (87). What most upset these two reviewers was clearly Child's depiction of miscegenation in seventeenth-century Puritan society.

However, it is striking that while the reviewers of *Hobomok* harshly criticized the relationship which Child described in *Hobomok*, the mixed-race story of Yamoyden was well-received. Twentieth-century critics such as Carolyn L. Karcher or Lelands S. Person, Jr. attempt to resolve this paradox through their explication of *Hobomok* as a novel which concerns Mary's "rebellion against patriarchy" (Karcher, "introduction" of *Hobomok* xx) more than racial problems, and which would thus offend contemporary male readers.<sup>9</sup> Child's characterization of Roger Conant also embodies significant departures from the historical figure. Historically speaking, Conant contributed to the foundation of Salem community and was much respected, but Child made him into a fanatic father, who could represent her anti-patriarchal attitude.

*Hobomok* indeed takes a feminist point of view as these critics demonstrate, but neither Karcher nor Person provide an adequate explanation of how Child could express her "rebellion against patriarchy" by transgressing racial borders. If Child's view of female identity in *Hobomok* aroused the aversion of reviewers, it may have done so due to the innately female self-fashioning which Mary Conant undertakes, an aspect of the novel which is directly in the tradition of the Indian captivity narrative.

It might be argued that *Hobomok* cannot be considered a captivity narrative simply because the Indians make an appearance in the novel. The heroine is not captured by the Indians. On the contrary, Child departs from the conventions of the genre by portraying another kind of captive: in place of the white captives "placed in an enclosed piece of public land, and a guard of thirty men set over them" (41), Child's reader discovers Indian captives—the Puritans, acting on Hobomok's advice, trap their Indian enemies. In other words, Child portrays the Puritans as captors and the Indians as captives.

Besides describing the capture of those who are wholly outside of Puritan society by those who are within it, Child also presents another type of captive: one who wishes to escape the strictures of society. Mary Conant, the heroine of the romance, has "no sympathy with her father's religious scruples" (46), and strongly expresses her longings for her homeland: "My heart yearns for England, and had it not been for my good mother, I would gladly have left Naumkeak to-day" (19). These remarks of Mary suggest that she has little desire to understand her father's religious fanaticism, and that only her sick mother keeps her in Naumkeak. Mary suffers her [fate] as if she were a captive, remaining

in her own society for the reason that she cannot “be disobedient to him [her father]”(20):

For her mother’s sake, she endured the mean and laborious offices which she was obliged to perform, but she lived only in the remembrance of the fairy spot in her existence [in England]. Alone as she was, without one spirit that came in contact with her own, she breathed in the regions of fancy; and many an ideal object had she invested with its rainbow robe. (47)

As female captives in the seventeenth century were compelled to escape their own society in order to find themselves, Mary feels a strong urge to fly from the place to which she belongs. Furthermore, as shall be seen, Mary decides not to return to England, but rather to enter the Indian society or wilderness, a locale which an ordinary woman would shun.

Mary’s decision brings to mind the notion of “female space,” as explained by Alice Jardin in *Gynesis*: “The space ‘outside of’ the conscious subject has always connoted the feminine in the history of Western thought—and any movement into alterity is a movement into that female space” (114–15). Both Jardin and Elshtain refer to the wilderness outside of Puritan community as a space for women—a chaotic, lawless area. Mary, who has been deeply uncomfortable with her environment, desires a female space beyond the confines of male-centered Puritan society.

Philip Gould and other critics, however, ascribe Mary’s flight to the Indians’ community to insanity caused by the death of her mother and the persecution of her lover, Charles (Gould 129). Indeed, Child describes Mary’s confusion at length:

A bewilderment of despair that almost amounted to insanity. She [Mary] sat down by her mother’s grave, and wished to weep. . . . There was chaos in Mary’s mind;—a dim twilight, which had first made all objects shadowy, and which was rapidly darkening into misery, almost insensible of its source. . . . In the midst of this whirlwind of thoughts and passions, she turned suddenly towards the Indian, as she said, “I will be your wife, Hobomok, if you love me.” “Hobomok has loved you many long moons,” replied he; “but he loved like as he loves the Great Spirit.” “Then meet me at my window an hour hence,” said she, “and be conveyed me to Plymouth.” (120–21)

Perhaps assaying to portray Mary’s motivation sympathetically, Child excuses her seemingly pointless elopement with the Indian as madness; indeed, between having a heartless father and losing both her mother and lover, Mary has good reason to go mad. However, Child later reveals a

hidden conscious willfulness behind Mary's decision; when Hobomok asks if she is ill, wanting to give her medicine, Mary replies laconically "I am not sick" (124). Hobomok, thus "again convinced of her rationality, went forth to make arrangements for his marriage" (124). With Mary thus explicitly asserting her "rationality", "chaos in her mind" is no longer a convincing excuse for her flight: instead, it should be considered a strategy which the heroine employs for her own purposes.

The Indian captivity narratives of women writers such as Rowlandson and Dustan suggest, as we have seen, that captivity by Indians helps the captive to liberate herself from male-centered social bondage, to accomplish her individual self-fashioning in the wilderness. In this sense, captivity—no matter how much suffering it might entail—is ultimately indispensable for women to gain the self-awareness which in Puritan society was supposed to remain humbled before God. In *Hobomok*, Mary enters the Indian community of her own free will because she has already been a captive in the male-dominated Puritan society.

Furthermore, this relationship between captivity narratives by female writers of the seventeenth-century, and historical romances set in the colonial era but written in the nineteenth century can be illuminated further through a legendary event that occurred in 1636 in Massachusetts Bay Colony: the antinomian controversy. Anne Hutchinson, the figure at the center of this controversy, immigrated to the new world as a disciple of John Cotton, grandfather of Cotton Mather, who, as mentioned earlier, used captivity narratives to promote hatred of Indians. Hutchinson, believing people should reconsider their religious faith, strongly demanded that the reconstruction of the patriarchal theocracy in New England society. This brave woman's ideology, by asserting the possibility of direct revelation from God, implied the superfluosity of the clergymen who had been conducting the congregation. John Winthrop, the governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, wrote about her in his diary on October 11, 1636:

One Mrs. Hutchinson, a member of the church of Boston, a woman of a ready wit and bold spirit, brought over with her two dangerous errors: 1. That the person of the Holy Ghost dwells in a justified person. 2. That no sanctification can help to evidence to us our justification. – from these two grew many branches. (193)

Eventually, Hutchinson was persecuted, banished, and ended up being killed allegedly by Indians after her "monstrous birth" (qtd. in Hall 85).

What she demonstrates is that the heretic was to be put into the land for aliens: in other words, Puritan society placed heretics and Indians in the same category as being equally and absolutely “Other.”

Surprisingly, such was the extent of the nineteenth-century’s reevaluation of Ann Hutchinson that it may be called a “Hutchinson revival.” The most famous exemplar is, of course, Hester Prynne, but this is not the first case of Hutchinson’s revival. David Reynolds offers several other novels whose heroines’ behavior and disposition are exceedingly Hutchison-like (344). While “adultery” is a crime of immoral sexual association with someone outside of marriage, “heresy” means an association with dangerous thoughts outside of orthodoxy. Otherness is always to be punished.

The similarity between Mary Conant and Anne Hutchison enables us to reread *Hobomok* as an early nineteenth-century reevaluation of Hutchinson. Mary also advances into the wilderness resisting her bigoted father who never allows heterodoxy, and gives a “monstrous birth” as a result of sexual intercourse with an Indian, a plot that enacts the joining of religious otherness as embodied by Hutchinson and Indianized otherness as represented in female captivity narratives. Mary, thus, has to escape into the wilderness by her own will precisely because the tradition of female otherness requires her desertion of white Puritan patriarchal society. A woman’s position in Puritan society resembled that of a captive, thus the usefulness of combining the otherness represented by Hutchinson and the otherness represented by the Indianization of a Puritan woman in the wilderness in order to write a narrative of female liberation through redefinition of self. But still a question arises: Even if Mary needed to flee Puritan society, why does she decide to spend her life in Indian society when she has long wanted to return to England?

### **Mary Conant: A Woman Who Expands the Female Space**

The marriage of an Indian man and a white woman was highly provocative to contemporary reviewers, eliciting such criticism as “Now this is a train of events not only unnatural, but revolting, we conceive, to every feeling of delicacy in man or woman” (anonymous 262–63); and “It is very bad taste, to say the least, and leaves upon the mind a disagreeable impression” (Sparks 87). The fear of the rape of white females by colored people which required Rowlandson to declare her purity in the seventeenth century doubtless remained in the nineteenth, and reviewers’ repugnance for *Hobomok* is understandable in terms of this fear.

Yet in *Hobomok* Child recreates a traditional Indian captivity narrative for women, attaching a deeper significance to miscegenation than her antecedents. In effect, Child reverses the structure of the rape narrative in which a colored man violates a white maiden,<sup>10</sup> with a story in which a white woman forces an Indian man to have a sexual relationship. It is Mary who offers the proposal of marriage to Hobomok (“I will be your wife, Hobomok, if you love me”) and as Child reveals, Mary does so in a state of “rationality.” Mary is far from the helpless maiden we often see in sensational fictions of the period; rather she is given the role of exploiter of an obedient Indian.

This reversed structure may be explicated in light of Hobomok’s disappearance into the woods when Charles miraculously returns alive to Naumkeak.

The Indian [Hobomok] gazed upon his rival [Charles], as he stood leaning his aching head against a tree; and once and again he indulged in the design of taking his life.

“No,” thought he. “She [Mary] was first his. Mary loves him better than she does for me: for even now she prays for him in her sleep. The sacrifice must be made for her.” (139)

Hobomok, who is seduced by Mary, leaves his society to allow Mary to return to her Puritan society with her child, little Hobomok, and marry Charles; eventually, people around her forget this poor Indian. Mary is not the stereotypical heroine of sentimental fiction deserted by her unfaithful lover. Instead, she plays the role of colonialist *femme fatale* who brings ruin to the noble savage. Here we cannot help but find the tradition of sensational fiction radically subverted.

Mary goes into the “female space” outside of her male-dominated society and produces chaos. The medium of this chaos is racial hybridity, which is antithetical to the purity so highly esteemed by the Puritans. Thus, Mary’s interracial relationship may be understood as solely a necessary precondition for having a hybrid child. As noted, women transgress the patriarchal convention in the wilderness, which enables them to establish their own “self” to liberate themselves from the bondage. The plot of racial transgression inherited from captivity narrative is a gateway to female imagination.

Charles can never be more than a surrogate father to this child. Hobomok, biological father of Little Hobomok, cannot claim his paternity because he remains an Indian, no matter how well he behaves like an Englishman. Through his “long residence with the white inhabitants

of Plymouth,” (36) as well as his marriage to Mary, Hobomok acquires an Englishman’s manner to such a degree that “he seems almost like an Englishman” (137). However, “almost” does not mean “completely.” Hobomok is almost white but not quite, and as such fulfills his purpose when he helps Mary to have a child of mixed race.

Much as Hobomok, despite his every effort, can never be a perfect Englishman, Mary is also Indianized but not quite; however, in Mary’s case this serves the larger purposes of the narrative. Mary is Indianized to some extent, gives birth to a hybrid child, and returns to the white community with her interracial child to expand the female space. For this reason, Mary cannot return to England, where she would have been subject to another hierarchical—that is, patriarchal—society. As the Indian was indispensable to the captivity narrative as the impetus for women’s self-fashioning, Hobomok is essential to Mary’s self-fashioning in Puritan society. Mary does not proclaim her carnal purity as did Rowlandson, nor does she slay the Indians as did Dustan. Nonetheless, all of these writers used the Indians to establish female selves, establishing a legacy of female imagination in American literary history.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The captivity narrative is not peculiar to the Puritans, but it clearly played an important role in colonial New England. As Fitzpatrick argues in “The Figure of Captivity: The Cultural Work of the Puritan Captivity Narrative,” “the New England Puritans did not invent the captivity narrative, nor did they monopolize the market in the seventeenth century. But while Puritan, Catholic, and Quaker alike read in their captivities the design of Providence, only the Puritans interpreted their trials as at once chastisements for insufficient faith and as God’s extraordinary means of converting the ‘lukewarm’ and confirming those he would elect” (Fitzpatrick 7).

<sup>2</sup> Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola identifies four reasons for the Indian’s taking of white captives: revenge, ransom, replacement of members, and use as slaves (*The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 2–8). Thus the Indians did not exclusively kill or enslave white people for revenge, although a considerable number of Indian captivity narratives focused on the brutality and savageness of the Indians.

<sup>3</sup> The mythologization of the Indians as the Vanishing American Other is another reason for the frequent appearance of Indians in the nineteenth-century novel. Lora Romero points out that forty novels about “the cult of Vanishing American,” including James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*, were published between 1824 and 1834 (385).

<sup>4</sup> Derounian-Stodola also accounts for the difficulty of publishing books for women written by women. It is clear that Rowlandson could never have published her autobiographical narrative without the help of ministers such as Increase Mather (98).

<sup>5</sup> In his essay on mimicry in post-colonial discourse, Homi K. Bhabha discusses how “mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal,” and how mimicry inevitably includes the differences (86).

<sup>6</sup> In *The Land before Her: Fantasy and Experience of American Frontiers, 1630–1860*, Annett Kolodny argues that myth or fantasy constructed by men excludes women from male-dominated society, and that women therefore must journey to the frontier (wilderness) to pursue their own fantasies, while men construct their myths in the forests or woods.

<sup>7</sup> Referring to the great popularity of the Indian captivity narrative in Britain, Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse framed a unique theory in “The American Origins of the English Novel,” to the effect that the Indian captivity narrative strongly influenced British sensational novelists such as Samuel Richardson (397–98).

<sup>8</sup> According to Roy Harvey Pearce, from around 1815 on, scholars believed that the Indians were the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes (*The Savage of America* 63). In general, the romanticization of the Indians reflected the diminishing menace which the Indians represented. Richard Slotkin explains that “with the gradual vanishing of the Indian populations east of the Appalachians, it became possible to romanticize the Indians as the noble savage and to employ him as a symbol of American libertarianism and independent patriotism” (418).

<sup>9</sup> Child published this romance anonymously (“by an American”). It is therefore difficult to argue that reviewers criticized *Hobomok* simply because it was written by a woman.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Williams argues that in rape narratives of New England, the race of the rapist is not significant: “. . . all of the rapists were out of control, regardless of their race. Although a character’s blackness served as an obvious symbol of depraved self-indulgence, this was not necessarily a uniquely black tendency. Though expedient, skin color was only one means used to identify the Other” (200). More to the point is the common description of rapists as equivalent to thieves whose violations of women represented transgressions of male property.

## WORKS CITED

- Armstrong, Nancy and Leonard Tennenhouse. “The American Origin of the English Novel.” *American Literary History* 4.3 (1992): 386–410.
- Bercovitch, Sacvan. *The American Jeremiad*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1978.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Bosman, Richard, ed. *Captivity Narrative of Hannah Dustan*. San Francisco: Arion, 1987.
- Child, Lydia Maria. *Hobomok and Other Writings on Indians*. 1986. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1991.
- Coat of Arms of the Conant Family. *Roger Conant: The Leader of the Old Planters, Salem 1626*. Salem, MA: New England & Virginia Co., n.d.
- Derounian, Kathryn Zabelle. “The Publication, Promotion, and Distribution of Mary White Rowlandson’s Indian Captivity Narrative in the Seventeenth Century.” *Early American Literature* 23.3 (1988): 239–61.
- Derounian-Stodola, Kathryn Z., and James A. Levernier. *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550–1900*. New York: Twayne, 1993.
- Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Woman and War*. 1987. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995.
- Fitzpatrick, Tara. “The Figure of Captivity: The Cultural Work of the Puritan Captivity Narrative.” *American Literary History* 3.1 (1991): 1–26.
- Gilbert, Sandra, and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. 1979. New Haven: Yale UP, 1984.

- Gould, Philip. *Covenant and Republic: Historical Romance and the Politics of Puritanism*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Hall, David D. *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989.
- . *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: A Documentary History*. 2nd ed. Durham NC: Duke UP, 1990.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. “The Duston Family.” *Bosman* 31–45.
- Jardin, Alice A. *Gynesis: Configuration of Woman and Modernity*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1985.
- Karcher, Carolyn L. *The First Woman in the Republic: The Cultural Biography of Lydia Maria Child*. Durham NC: Duke UP, 1994.
- . Introduction. *Hobomok and Other Writings on Indians*. By Lydia Maria Child. 1986. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1991. ix–xxxviii.
- Kolodny, Annette. *The Land before Her: Fantasy and Experience of American Frontiers, 1630–1860*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1984.
- Mather, Cotton. “A Narrative of Hannah Dustan’s Notable Deliverance from Captivity.” *Puritans among Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676–1724*. Ed. Alden Vaughan and Edward W. Clark. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1981. 161–64.
- Neuberg, Victor. “Chapbooks in America: Reconstructing the Popular Reading of Early America.” *Reading in America: Literature and Social History*. Ed. Cathy N. Davidson. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989. 81–113.
- Pearce, Roy Harvey. “The Significance of the Captivity Narrative.” *American Literature* 19 (1947): 1–20.
- “Review of Hobomok, a Tale of Early Times.” *North American Review* July (1824): 262–63.
- Reynolds, David. *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard-Belknap, 1988.
- Romero, Lora. “Vanishing Americans: Gender, Empire, and New Historicism.” *American Literature* 63.3 (1991): 385–404.
- Rowlandson, Mary White. “The Sovereignty and Goodness of God.” *Puritans among Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676–1724*. Ed. Alden Vaughan and Edward W. Clark. Cambridge, MA: Harvard-Belknap, 1981. 31–75.
- Slotkin, Richard. *Regeneration through Violence*. Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 1973.
- Sparks, Jared. “Recent American Novels.” *North American Review* 21 (1825): 78–104.
- Thoreau, Henry David. “from *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack*.” *Bosman*. 47–53.
- Toulouse, Teresa A. “‘My Own Credit’: Strategies of (E)valuation in Mary Rowlandson’s Captivity.” *American Literature* 64.4 (1992): 655–74.
- VanDerBeets, Richard. “Indian Captivity Narrative as Ritual.” *American Literature* 43.4 (1972): 548–62.
- Vaughan, Alden and Edward W. Clark, eds. *Puritans among Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676–1724*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1981.
- Williams, Daniel. “The Gratification of That Corrupt and Lawless Passion: Character Types and Themes in Early New England Rape Narratives.” *A Mixed Race: Ethnicity in Early America*. Ed. Frank Shuffelton. New York: Oxford UP, 1993. 194–221.
- Winthrop, John. *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630–1649*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard-Belknap, 1996.