

Mary rowlandson captivity narrative



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The Captive Voice: Two Voices of Mary Rowlandson Captivity narratives are a unique body of literature, whisking the reader away on a wild adventure of danger, atrocity, and utter barbarism. Hauntingly realistic, the narrative strikes fear into the heart of the reader with depictions of abduction, torture, and slaughter. The story unfolds as seen through the eyes of the afflicted. This biased storytelling, along with the motives that drive the production of such stories, begs one to question how much of the account is exaggerated.

Mary Rowlandson's *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, is an excellent illustration of this paradigm. Admittedly, the atrocities committed against Rowlandson were extreme, her losses irreconcilable; yet her portrayal of her captors is one-sided and derogatory. Their actions are never culturally justified and altruistic actions that contradict her portrayal of Native Americans as savages are conveniently neglected.

In doing so, two distinct voices are heard: the one of Mary Rowlandson, a woman feeling intense human emotion, and the Puritan, captive to the mindset that Indians are innately evil, sent by God to purge the land of those who stray from the path of righteousness. Her narrative becomes an Jeremiad, warning other Puritans of the consequences of religious disobedience and completing the religious typology ordained to them by God. Throughout the narrative, Rowlandson refers to the Indians as "murderous wretches" (257), "ravenous beasts" (259), "black creatures" (259), as well as "bloody heathen" (258) who "[go] on, burning, and destroying before them" (257). The Indians are denied their humanity and their agency, being only described using non-human adjectives as if they are

another species that “ spread themselves over the deserted English fields” (Rowlandson 266). She depicts their dancing as “ a lively resemblance of hell” (259).

Her Puritan ethnocentrism prevents her from seeing the Native’s...