

mary rowlandson

Government, Colonialism



Mary Rowlandson was a devote puritan who was captured by Native Americans, along with her children and other settlers. “The Sovereignty and Goodness of God” was the narrative she wrote after her release from captivity. This account is a combination of Rowlandson’s true story, as well as a form of propaganda. The goal was to deter colonists from going to live with the Natives while encouraging people to return to the church. From my interpretation of Mary Rowlandson’s Narrative, I believe it is indeed a form of propaganda.

During the 1680’s colonists were less threatened by Native Americans and the idea of leaving their colony to live among them became increasingly popular. Settlers were fed up with the restrictions of colonial living. “Always concerned that sinful persons might prefer a life of ease to hard work, Puritans feared that Indian society might prove attractive to colonists who lacked the proper moral fiber”¹ This fear caused for the encouragement and publication of many captivity narratives. In addition to the colonists straying away from the colony, they also began to stray from the church.

Rowlandson’s narrative is seen to be propaganda simply because of the large emphasis she places on religion. The amount of bible verses throughout her narrative makes it difficult to believe that she didn’t simply place them there to convince people that God is the only reason she is alive today. This increased her reader’s faith in God compelling many of them to return to the church, in hope to be saved themselves. In saying so, I also believe that a large portion of her narrative is an accurate account of her experience as a captive. Throughout the narrative, there is a large amount of detail describing how the natives treated her.

She describes being treated not as a captive but more of a servant. 2 Although she disliked the Natives she did not depict them as savage monsters but rather focused on how they lived a life of chaos. In both cases, be sure you identify what you believe Rowlandson was trying to achieve, as well as the methods she employed to do this. Was she successful in these goals? These accounts were popular readings throughout the colonies, and very affective in portraying the Native American life style in such a way that colonist once again feared them.