



Women's Indian Captivity Narratives

Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola (Editor / Contributor) , Mary Jemison (Contributor) , Sarah F. Wakefield (Contributor) , James E. Seaver (Contributor) , Mary Godfrey (Contributor) , Mary Rowlandson (Contributor) , Cotton Mather (Contributor) , Elizabeth Hanson (Contributor) , more... Abraham Panther (Contributor) , Jemima Howe (Contributor) , Mary Kinnan (Contributor) ...less

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Enthralling generations of readers, the narrative of capture by Native Americans is arguably the first American literary form dominated by the experiences of women. The ten selections in this anthology span the early history of this country (1682-1892) and range in literary style from fact-based narrations to largely fictional, spellbinding adventure stories. The women are variously victimized, triumphant, or, in the case of Mary Jemison, permanently transculturated. This collection includes well known pieces such as Mary Rowlandson's *A True History* (1682), Cotton Mather's version of Hannah Dunstan's infamous captivity and escape (after scalping her captors), and the "Panther Captivity", as well as lesser known texts. As Derounian-Stodola demonstrates in the introduction, the stories also raise questions about the motives of their (often male) narrators and promoters, who in many cases embellish melodrama to heighten anti-British and anti-Indian propaganda, shape the tales for ecclesiastical purposes, or romanticize them to exploit the growing popularity of sentimental fiction in order to boost sales.

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From Reader Review Women's Indian Captivity Narratives for online ebook

Jonathan says

Read Rowlandson for my American Lit class, read the majority of the rest in my own time. The majority of these didn't really hold my interest for very long and I kind of found myself skimming through many of the stories.

Maybe I'll come back for a more careful reading one day, but for now I don't intend on picking it up again.

Graychin says

The editor's agenda (damn the patriarchy!) occasionally distracts, but this is a fine collection of first-hand accounts from the 1600s through the 1800s, of real historical value. I was particularly fascinated by Mary Rowlandson's experiences during King Philip's War in New England (I'd read a bit about her in Nathaniel Philbrick's *Mayflower*) and especially by Mary Jemison's story. Jemison was captured as a young girl about 1755 after the family's Pennsylvania farm was raided and all her family members killed. Adopted by the Senecas, she eventually became fully assimilated to tribal culture, married twice and had children, and refused on more than one occasion to return to Anglo-American life. She tells her story (as an eighty-year-old woman, in the 1820s) with appealing honesty, balancing fairly the real virtues and the no less real brutalities of native life.

Bronwyn says

Didn't have time to read all the narratives. I focused mostly on the introductions, since I was looking for more historic information, and the narratives are more literary. Might pick this up later and give the narrative another try.

Katy Dickinson says

From my January 25, 2008 blog <http://blogs.sun.com/katysblog/entry/...>

1782 William Crawford, Simon Girty, and History

Last month when I visited Washington, D.C. for the first time in many decades, I toured the National Museum of the American Indian, opened as part of the Smithsonian Institution in 2004. It seemed to me that one way of understanding more about the complex relationship between the European/American cultures and the American Indian cultures was to read reports from individuals who had personally experienced both. In the museum store, I bought two books:

o Women's Indian Captivity Narratives, Editor: Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, Penguin Classics, 1998,

ISBN-10: 0140436715, ISBN-13: 978-0140436716

o Captured by the Indians: 15 Firsthand Accounts, 1750-1870 Editor: Frederick Drimmer, Dover Publications, 1985, ISBN-10: 0486249018, ISBN-13: 978-0486249018

In these books, I was interested to read for the first time about the death by burning in 1782 of General George Washington's friend, Colonel William Crawford. This disturbing story was told in:

o "That is Your Great Captain" by Dr. John Knight, 1783 (in Captured by the Indians)

o "To Eat Fire Tomorrow" by John Slover as told to Hugh H. Brackenridge, 1782 (in Captured by the Indians)

o "A Narrative of the Life of Mary Jemison" by James E. Seaver, 1824 (in Women's Indian Captivity Narratives)

Knight and Slover were captured with Crawford after Crawford's failed expedition against the Ohio Indians (Wyandot, Huron, Delaware, and Shawnee tribes). Knight and Mary Jemison's husband Hiokattoo (of the Seneca tribe) were witnesses to Crawford's death; Slover was told of it by his captors.

Trying to sort out what happened by reading these memorable accounts is a good exercise in detection and understanding the difficulties of History even when first-hand accounts are available.

...

Having read these books, I have a greater appreciation for the complexity of this early period of American history and the interactions of the Indian, British, French, and American cultures. It is certainly more exciting than I remember from my required American History courses in High School and college!

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Srhhbth says

Collection of women's stories spanning more than 200 years. Variety of experiences - one woman chose to stay with her captors and became a full member of the family/community, one escaped by killing her captors, one published her story to counter false accusations about her behavior during her captivity, and so on.

Introduction gives plenty of helpful background/context for each narrative as well as the captivity narrative as a genre, and points out that the women's stories may differ not just based on their actual experiences but based on whether they were written by the woman alone, or through the assistance of another person who might have had different motives & messages.

Lindsey Z says

I only read a couple selections from this anthology, but it is well organized with a useful introduction to the entire text as well as to the individual narratives.

Andrea Strube says

Meh.

Shelby says

I read Rowlandson, Dustan, Hanson, Howe, "Panther Captivity"

Kristen Jones says

Fascinating, but very dry. I found it much more enjoyable to read when I read the actual narratives first, and THEN went back and read the scholarly commentary that preceded each story. Overall, it was so interesting to see the settling of the American continent from a perspective I haven't heard. I read the official bits in history books, was taught the California PC version of our horrible cruelty to the Native Americans, but this was the first time I heard from the settlers themselves and began to understand the fear and distrust rightly earned on BOTH sides.
