A Puritan Woman's Perspective:
The Captivity Narrative of Mary Rowlandson

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In the Indian captivity narrative published in 1682 titled *A Narrative of the Captivity, Sufferings, and Removes, of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, Mary discussed how her Puritan beliefs and her role as a woman shaped her time as a captive of the Wampanoag, Nipmuc, and Narragansett Indians.[1] During this captivity, the unfamiliar environment of the Native Americans stripped her femininity and her culture from her. Mary was a Puritan woman trapped in a savage, foreign world. She believed she was untrue to her Puritan faith and God punished her by placing her in the brutish environment with the Indians. She wrote that "I lived in prosperity, having the comforts of this world about me, my relations by me, and my heart cheerful, and taking little care for any thing; and yet seeing many under many trials and afflictions, in sickness, weakness, poverty, losses… now I see the Lord had his time to scourge and chasten me."[2] She lived a life of overabundance and God punished her to make her aware of that. Mary Rowlandson's account of her struggles demonstrated the culture of the Puritans and the roles that gender and religion played in their society. This narrative is a prime example of the differing cultures of natives and colonists and it holds significant importance because it offered a female perspective of a field that was previously male dominated.

In the mid 1600's, prior to Rowlandson's captivity, tensions between natives and colonist became increasingly worse. The alliance between Massasoit and the Plymouth colony ensured

[1] Kathryn Derounian-Stodola, *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives* (New York: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998), 3.
[2] Mary Rowlandson, *A narrative of the captivity, sufferings, and removes, of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, (Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, 1856), 120-1.

peace for many years; after Massasoit's death, his son Wamsutta took over as chief. When Wamsutta met with the Plymouth Colony for peaceful negotiations, he died suddenly; Wamsutta's brother Metacomet, or King Philip as the English knew him, took over as chief after his death. Metacomet distrusted the Plymouth Colony and believed them responsible for Wamsutta's death; after this, the alliance in place since 1621 came undone.[3] Following the breaking of this alliance, war erupted between Metacomet and the colonists. During King Philip's War in 1675, a group of Wampanoag, Nipmuc, and Narragansett Indians raided Rowlandson's village of Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Mary's recollection of that dreadful event gave a clear picture of the devastations to the people of Lancaster. She wrote, "It was a solemn sight to see so many Christians lying in their blood, some here and some there, like a company of sheep torn by wolves. All of them stript naked by a company of hell-hounds, roaring, singing, ranting, and insulting, as if they would have torn our hearts out."[4] There were several people who survived the attack, and the Indians took them as captives, including Mary Rowlandson who was held captive for eleven weeks. During her time with the Indians they treated her as if she were a slave. The Indians took these captives for many reasons, one of which was to use them for their skills. Metacomet, as well as other natives, commanded Mary to sew and knit clothes for them; they allowed her to live because her skills proved beneficial. After three months in the wilderness, the natives ransomed her off to her town for twenty pounds. When she returned to Lancaster, she wrote down the events of her captivity, and several years later had it published.

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[3] Pauline Turner Strong, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial American Captivity Narratives*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1999), 89.
[4] Rowlandson, 9-10.

This narrative, which Mary originally intended to be her personal diary, became increasingly popular within her town after she wrote it. During that time the Puritan minister, Increase Mather, came upon Mary's narrative; Mather, as well as friends and family, encouraged Mary to make her work available to the public. Mather had been compiling providential writings from various people into a single book; because of the length of Mary's work however, at over one hundred pages long, Mather encouraged her to have it published on its own, separate from his compilation.[5] It is likely that Mather sponsored her narrative; he had close ties with those at the Boston and Cambridge printing presses, and he would have been able to get it printed. After its publication it quickly became a best seller, with four editions released in 1682. It sold over one thousand copies in its first year alone.[6] Though it sold that many copies, the actual number of people who read it was much higher. Usually the wealthy and the clergy were the only people who owned books other than the Bible. Those who owned copies of Rowlandson's narrative often passed the book around to others, who then read it aloud to groups. Therefore, the readership was much higher than the number of copies sold.[7]

Rowlandson's narrative was noteworthy because it served as a means for a woman to have a voice in Puritan society. As one of the most significant books of its time, Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative had a lasting effect on the history of women in colonial society. Very little historical works exist about women in colonial America other than about those who have acted out against society; in those cases, court records tell their stories. The trials of Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dyer provide two examples where court records show what happened when women broke societal norms in Puritan America. The other major source is the journals of

[5] Kathryn Zabelle Derounian, "The Publication, Promotion, and Distribution of Mary Rowlandson's Indian Captivity Narrative in the Seventeenth Century," *Early American Literature, Vol. 23, No. 3,* (University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 242.
[6] Derounian, 240.
[7] Derounian, 256.

John Winthrop, governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony.[8] With Mary Rowlandson's narrative though, it was a firsthand account of the struggles of a Puritan woman. These Indian captivity narratives began as a literary genre dominated by women.[9] Men wrote some, but the majority of popular versions were women's narratives because women served as more interesting subjects. These works of literature were important because of the time in which women wrote them; the narratives recorded the early relationships between Indians and their European neighbors. Women played an instrumental role in creating this distinct genre; they helped to record colonial history from a female perspective.

It was a significant piece of literature because it was the only non-poetry work written by a woman published in seventeenth century America.[10] For many, it served as the unofficial start of the feminist movement by marking the moment when women began gaining more respect and equality; at that time, women played a limited role in society. Spiritually they were equals, but socially they were inferior to men.[11] Due to their inability to vote or play a part in the public sphere, they were "akin to that of a minor or a slave."[12] Rowlandson, by recording her captivity, demonstrated the restrictive roles of women during the seventeenth century. Without realizing it, she spoke for the women of her society.

Rowlandson's narrative has gained recognition as feminist literature; though not its original purpose, it has the qualities of feminist scholarship. A feminist interpretation of the narrative argues, "The religious language and metaphors female authors employed are…largely

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[8] John Winthrop, *Winthrop's journal, "History of New England," 1630-1649, Volume 7*, Edited by James Kendall Hosmer, (New York: Charles Scribner's Songs, 1908), 28, 263.
[9] Derounian-Stodola, xi.
[10] Deborah L. Madsen, *Feminist Theory and Literary Practice*, (London: Pluto Press, 2000), xi.
[11] Robert Bolton, *Some General Directions for a Comfortable Walking with God*, (Soli Deo Gloria Publications, Morgan, PA, 1991).
[12] Madsen, 3.

an artificial overlay, a male interpretive frame imposed on authentic female experience."[13] Works of prominent Puritan men preceded and ended the captivity narrative; as a result, it was not simply a woman's narrative. The preface, although anonymous, was believed to be the work of Increase Mather.[14] At the end of the narrative was Mary's husband, Reverend Joseph Rowlandson's, last sermon.

Joseph Rowlandson's sermon was a jeremiad, a popular type of sermon in Puritan America; jeremiads focused on morals and sinful behavior, often prophesying about the downfall of society if morals did not improve. It was the "fire and brimstone" type of sermon later popularized by Jonathan Edwards. By surrounding the narrative with men's interpretations, the meaning of the narrative shifted to accommodate their own purposes; Increase Mather saw it as an opportunity to fuse historical writing with religious writing, thus reaching out to a larger audience.[15] Many Puritan ministers worked this narrative into their sermons in order to put fear into their congregation. They wanted them to agonize over what would happen to them if God were to punish them for their actions. Rowlandson viewed the hardships she endured as a captive as her punishment for not being a true Puritan. Ministers also used this narrative as an anti-Indian propaganda piece to create fear of the natives. [16] Female Indian captivity narratives made the natives appear more savage because women were the weak, vulnerable sex; therefore, it was even worse for the Indians to hold a woman captive.

Mary Rowlandson defied her role as a woman by writing her narrative after she returned to her town of Lancaster. The womanly thing to do would have been to return to living a normal

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[13] Gary L Ebersole, C*aptured by texts: puritan to postmodern images of Indian captivity*, (Virginia: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 268.
[14] Derounian-Stodola, 5.
[15] Derounian, 253.
[16] Derounian-Stodola, xiv.

life, presenting oneself as if the terrible ordeal had not happened. She felt she had to write her narrative, however, as both a grieving process and as a way to put order back into her life. By writing down the events of her captivity, she gained some closure to that chapter of her life. Publishing this narrative violated her role as a woman though, as female authorship could not contribute to the historical work of the era.[17]

Another problem with Rowlandson writing this narrative was the way Puritans viewed the grieving process; public mourning was not a norm in seventeenth century New England.[18] That was something that was very private. By writing her narrative, she opened up her emotions for everyone to see; this went against traditional Puritan thought on mourning and grief. In Mitchell Breitwieser's book on Puritan mourning, he quotes Shakespeare in saying, "Tis unmanly grief, It shows a will most incorrect to heaven, A heart unfortified, or mind impatient, An understanding simple and unschooled."[19] The Puritans followed this belief and it was an act of the weak to publicly grieve over death. Normally Puritans viewed death as transcendence into heaven or hell; it was not the end, just the next part of life. They did not focus much attention on burial ceremonies or grieving.[20] This narrative, however, was a mourning process and a way to remember the family Mary lost during her captivity. Because of this, the narrative stood out after its publication.

John Winthrop was one prominent Puritan who spoke out against women whose writings became popular; he distrusted women writers and their work and believed as long as a woman's

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[17] Anne Bradstreet, "Prologue" in *The poems of Mrs. Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672): together with her prose remains* (The De Vinne Press, 1897), 17.
[18] Mitchell Robert Breitwieser, *American Puritanism and the Defense of Mourning: Religion, Grief, and Ethnology in Mary White Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 55.
[19] Breitwieser, 56.
[20] Breitwieser, 55.

writing remained in the private sphere, it did not cause a problem.[21] The problem arose when their literature became significant enough to gain recognition, as Rowlandson's narrative had. Historical writing and poetry were male domains; even Anne Bradstreet, who wrote poetry during that time, caused controversy because of her popularity.[22] Increase Mather, on the other hand, did not have as strict a view as Winthrop did. Rowlandson's writing, Mather argued, posed no threat because it simply recorded her captivity; she was not arguing for any point or trying to change anything in society.[23] In fact, her narrative reinforced Puritan ideals.

Traditions of seventeenth century society placed limits on the roles of a Puritan woman. Men dominated women and expected them to serve and answer to them, as Puritan minister Richard Baxter stated that wives were to "forsake father and mother, and cleave to you."[24] Women could not serve their own purposes, as Mary did when she wrote her narrative; by doing so, she was not adhering to Puritan gender roles because it did not benefit her husband. Baxter also said wives were to be "prudent, lowly, loving, meek, self-denying, patient, harmless, holy, and heavenly".[25] Women had a difficult and constraining role to fill; Mary, through her narrative, tried to demonstrate that she was an example of all these things. This narrative served as a way for Mary to redeem herself from the savage ways of Native American society. She wanted others to know that she had not shifted from her Puritan belief; she was instead, an example of Puritan faith.

John Winthrop, in his journal titled *History of New England*, wrote about a wife's role in regards to her husband. He says that "a true wife accounts her subjection her honor and freedom,

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[21] Breitwieser, 18.
[22] Bradstreet, "Prologue", 17.
[23] Breitwieser, 18-9.
[24] Baxter, 118.
[25] Baxter, 119.

and would not think her condition safe and free, but in her subjection to her husband's authority."[26] This displays how, in Puritan society, a woman was beneath a man; they were to love their husbands and hold them superior to themselves. Without her husband, a wife was nothing. When the Indians held Mary captive, they kept her from Joseph, thus causing her distress; for a woman to be away from her husband, she was breaking from traditional Puritan ideals. Winthrop says, "Whether her [husband] smiles upon her, and embraceth her in his arms, or whether he frowns, or rebukes, or smites her, she apprehends the sweetness of his love in all, and is… instructed in every such dispensation of his authority over her."[27] This gives a clear picture of a woman's role; she had no role in society other than to serve her husband. Even if he "rebukes" her, she should be grateful she had a husband to do this to her; Mary does not have the comforts of her husband though during her captivity.

The natives used Mary's relationship with Joseph to control her. The Indians had a good understanding of their Puritan rivals; they knew the importance of husband-wife relationships and they exploited that to scare Mary into subjugation and to make her feel helpless. They threatened to kill her husband, even going telling her he died. They also said that he remarried, presuming Mary to be dead.[28] All of these things contributed to Mary's feelings of helplessness. In Reverend Richard Baxter's sermons, he stated that "if love be removed but for an hour between husband and wife, they are so long as a bone out of joint; there is no ease, no order, no work well done, till they are restored and set in joint again."[29] This demonstrated why Mary would have felt such vast feelings of despair. Puritan sermons suggested wives should not be apart from their husbands because of the many temptations men would face while separated from

[26] Winthrop, *Winthrop's journal*, 239.
[27] Winthrop, *Winthrop's journal*, 239.
[28] Rowlandson, 61-2.
[29] Baxter, 117.

their wives.[30] The natives used this to control Mary. With everyone telling her something different, she doubted what was real; she was unsure of everything. This manipulation forced Mary to rest solely on her religion to pull her through her captivity.

Puritans used their religion to deal with difficult situations. Rowlandson interpreted her capture and the eleven weeks spent as a captive, through a religious lens. In her writing, as she discussed the traumatic events that she experienced, she continually emphasized that her religion got her through the ordeal. One example of this was she quoted scripture throughout the narrative; she did this to help her understand all the situations she endured. She also used the Bible as an analogy of what happened in her life. The use of biblical typology was evident throughout the narrative; she identified with passages and people in the Bible in order to predict what would happen to her.[31] This comforted her and made her feel as if she had some control over her life. Using biblical typology was popular in Puritan sermons and writings. Rowlandson's use of scripture in this way made the narrative appeal to more people; it was a way for Rowlandson to show those who read the narrative that she was well educated in scripture. It also demonstrated that she was within the societal norms of Puritan New England.

Mary wrote of her captivity as a way to atone for any sinful behavior she may have exhibited. As the wife of a Puritan minister, Mary Rowlandson was devoted to her faith; she believed God predestined their lives and their salvation before they were born. God had already decided whether they were destined for heaven or hell. Many Puritans "lived in an agony of uncertainty, wondering each day whether God had singled them out for eternal glory or eternal

[30] Baxter, 124.
[31] William J Scheick, *Authority and Female Authorship in Colonial America*, (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 92.

torment."[32] Puritans believed in a covenant of grace, not a covenant of works; because of this, their actions in life could not change their fate. Rowlandson believed that "the Lord by his almighty power, preserved a number of us from death."[33] God spared her, and not some of her neighbors, for reasons unknown to her; God had a plan for those who survived the attack. She held on to this belief during the many hardships she endured in the eleven-week captivity with the Indians.

Religion encompassed all aspects of Puritan life. Everything good or bad that happened was for a reason; anytime something negative happened, they felt that they must accept it with strength and trust in God.[34] Despite not having any remaining possessions and only limited contact with some family members, Rowlandson was able to push on through terrible conditions because she had everything she needed with her God and her religion. [35] Her religious beliefs restrained her from adopting Native American ways; she believed saved individuals acted in a way that demonstrated they had God's grace. Mary thought of this with her every action. She wanted to believe that God had chosen her for salvation and she demonstrated this through her loyalty to Puritanism.

The idea of predestination remained on the minds of Puritans at all times; the issue of whether or not their creator destined them for heaven or hell was the most important question to Puritans. John Winthrop wrote in his journal of one woman who was so concerned over salvation, that she threw her baby into a well, thus proving that she was not true to her faith.[36] She believed there was no way someone pure could commit an act so obviously evil; the

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[32] Edmund Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop* (Longman, 1999), 5.
[33] Rowlandson, 10.
[34] Anne Bradstreet, "Some Verses Upon the Burning of our House" in *The poems of Mrs. Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672): together with her prose remains*, (The De Vinne Press, 1897), 343-5.
[35]Rowlandson, 40.
[36] Winthrop, *Winthrop's journal*, 60.

persistent question of whether or not she had God's grace was always on her mind. Trying to kill her child seemed like a logical way for this woman to determine God's providence. This demonstrated how much control religion had over their lives in seventeenth century New England.

The religious culture of Puritan New England showed many inconsistencies though. As Edmund Morgan discussed John Winthrop and the dilemmas that arose because of the conflicting demands of the Puritan faith:

> Puritanism required that a man devote his life to seeking salvation but told him he was helpless to do anything but evil. Puritanism required that he rest his whole hope in Christ but taught him that Christ would utterly reject him unless before he was born God had foreordained his salvation. Puritanism required that man refrain from sin but told him that he would sin anyhow. Puritanism required that he reform the world in the image of God's holy kingdom, but taught him that the evil of the world was incurable and inevitable.[37]

Such contradictions made Puritan life stressful and uncertain; people lived life in fear of whether or not their God predestined them to go to heaven and this affected every aspect of life. This "Puritan dilemma," as Morgan calls it, was the contradiction of Puritan beliefs and how they dealt with the temptations of life. They had to live in a world filled with sin and temptation, yet they could not stray from God. During Rowlandson's captivity, she continually faced this dilemma. She endured many hardships, but clung to her Puritan religious beliefs; she could not fall prey to the sin and evil all around her.

When looking at Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative, it helps to understand both Puritan life and the life of Native Americans. John Winthrop demonstrated the relationship

[37] Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma*, 5.

between the natives and the English in a letter he wrote to Sir Nathaniel Rich. In it, he wrote of the decimation of the native population, "[As] for the natives, they are near all dead of the smallpox, so the Lord hath cleared our title to what we possess."[38] Winthrop believed the land was the rightful property of the Puritans, and God showed his favor for them by killing off the native population. It was their "manifest destiny" to expand outward and take Indian lands. As this letter demonstrated, relations between Puritans and natives during the seventeenth century were not friendly; the Pequot War provides an example of the tensions between natives and New Englanders.[39] The Plymouth and Massachusetts colonists fought against the Pequot when land became scarce.[40] King Philip's War further demonstrated the tensions between the natives and the English.

Another important area to examine when looking at Mary Rowlandson's narrative is how Native American women acted; one of the most important Indian women in New England during that time was Weetamoo.[41] She serves as the best example of the expectations for Native American women. She was married to Wamsutta and was Mary Rowlandson's master during much of her captivity.[42] By looking at the distinctions between these two individuals, the roles of women in both societies become evident because both were prominent members of their communities. After Wamsutta's death, Weetamoo became the sachem of Pocasset, a Wampanoag town. As sachem of this town, she was the leader of more than three hundred warriors.[43] She was a fierce leader, considered one of the most powerful Indian leaders in New

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[38] John Winthrop, *Mounting Conflict with Native American*, A letter written to Sir Nathaniel Rich on May 22, 1634.
[39] William Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647, Volume 2*, (Edited by Charles Dean. Reprinted by The Massachusetts Historical Collections. Boston, 1856), 355.
[40] Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma*, 143-4.
[41] Carol Berkin, *First Generations: Women in Colonial America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 52.
[42] Rowlandson, 82-3.
[43] Turner Strong, 89.

England at this time, second only to Metacomet.[44] Although Rowlandson's account of Weetamoo favors the Puritans, it still serves as an example of the vast differences between the gender roles of the two cultures. According to Rowlandson's description, Weetamoo was a proud, independent, strong, and powerful woman.[45] Mary explains Weetamoo as "a severe and proud dame… bestowing every day in dressing herself near as much time as any of the gentry of the land; powdering her hair, and painting her face, going with her necklaces, with jewels in her ears, and bracelets upon her hands."[46] This went against what Mary expected of a woman. Weetamoo, in being the leader of a town and its warriors, served in a position that was unheard of for Puritan women.

Rowlandson's narrative not only related to the sufferings of a single woman, but to many in New England, it also served as an analogy for what was going on in the Massachusetts colony and in England.[47] Perhaps one reason Increase Mather and other prominent men encouraged this narrative's distribution was because it was an example of lost sovereignty. A cultural shift had occurred, where colonists leaned more towards "new English versus royal English sovereignty."[48] With the death of Charles II, the Puritans feared they would lose some of their sovereignty under the new king. King Charles II restricted their self-governance, and they felt there would be further persecution against them once the Catholic Duke of York, James, took the throne. Rowlandson's captivity narrative was an expression of persecution and loss of freedom, which paralleled what was going on in England and in the colonies during that time. John Bunyan, writer of *Pilgrims Progress*, also helped Rowlandson's narrative gain recognition by

[44] Berkin, 55.
[45] Rowlandson, 47-8.
[46] Rowlandson, 85.
[47] Teresa Toulouse, *The Captive's Position: Female Narrative, Male Identity and Royal Authority in Colonial New England*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 33.
[48] Toulouse, 22.

placing an advertisement for it at the end of his book. He saw her account as a way to demonstrate the mistreatment Puritans would suffer during the reign of King James II of England; all of these aspects helped lead to the narrative's popularity.[49]

When looking at this narrative as an expression of the loss of sovereignty, the title of the work becomes important. During that time, the publishers were often the ones who titled a book.[50] The publishers titled Rowlandson's book in order to appeal to specific audiences. When the publishers printed the narrative in 1682, there were separate editions released in Cambridge, Massachusetts and in London, England. The projected audience for the narrative differed in each location; the titles demonstrated this difference.

The narrative originally published in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1682 was *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, Together, With the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed; Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson. Commended by her, to all that desires to know the Lords doings to, and dealings with Her. Especially to her dear Children and Relations. Written by Her own Hand for Her private Use, and now made Publick at the earnest Desire of some Friends, and for the benefit of the Afflicted*.[51] This title appealed to New Englanders because of its reference to religion and to sovereignty. Puritans drifting from the original intent of a "city on a hill" was evident to those who read Rowlandson's narrative, as the church was not as pure as it had been when the Puritans began Massachusetts colony. [52] This was not the church John Winthrop spoke of in his speech on the *Arbella* as the Puritans were

[49] Toulouse, 24.
[50] Ebersole, 18.
[51] Ebersole, 17-8.
[52] John Winthrop, *A Modell of Christian Charity*, (Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society 3rd series 7:31-48. Boston, 1838), 47.

coming to America.[53] Because of this shift in the Puritan faith, people such as Increase Mather helped to spread the popularity of this narrative; he used it in sermons to show his congregation they needed to retain their true Puritan faith. The word sovereignty in the title also appealed to those in New England. They felt the tightening constants on their political and religious sovereignty and by using that term in the title, the publishers could appeal to these people.

The narrative's publication in London of that same year presented readers with a different title; it was *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, A Minister's Wife in New-England. Wherein is set forth, the Cruel and Inhuman Usage she underwent amongst the Heathens, for Eleven Weeks time: and her Deliverance from them. Written by her own Hand, for the Private Use: And now made publick at the earnest Desire of some Friends, for the Benefit of the Afflicted*.[54] This version did not mention sovereignty or religion. During that time, tension in London over the renewal of the Massachusetts Bay charter increased; it was a disconcerting issue for Englanders. Because of that, this title appealed to readers in London more so than the title used in Cambridge, Massachusetts; the difference in titles demonstrated the increasing divisions between New Englanders and royal authority. This title also focused much more on the Native Americans and their savage behavior towards Rowlandson. British audiences found captivity narratives from the colonies to be far more intriguing than works written in Europe.[55] Readers saw it as an entertaining narrative, telling the story of an innocent woman and her savage captors; the title of this work drew in readers based upon their specific interests.

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[53] Winthrop, *A Modell of Christian Charity*, 33-48.
[54] Ebersole, 18.
[55] Linda Colley, *Captives*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), 153.

Another reason men in New England accepted and published this narrative was that it reaffirmed the male position in Puritan society; in an analysis of the relationship between male and female identity, Teresa Toulouse stated that:

> The overarching structure of Rowlandson's captivity narrative – its movement from affliction to providential restoration – and the defining characteristics of the woman captive who undergoes this movement – passivity, humility, dependence, and obedience – would concretely demonstrate as no jeremiad could a relationship between historically specific behaviors and divine intervention. As growing ministerial awareness of the power of popular print culture suggests, this structure and s/he whose characteristics define it became a means of widely disseminating and popularizing their version of male as well as female colonial identity in the face of perceived threats.[56]

The narrative demonstrated the behaviors expected of women; because of this, ministers in New England often used women's captivity narratives in their sermons. They chose to use ones written by women rather than those written by men, in order to demonstrate the importance of remaining true to your faith in times of difficulty; society presented women as the vulnerable sex, more prone to sinful behavior. This idea was not new, and was prevalent throughout the history of Christianity, with Eve being responsible for original sin. Because of that, women were more likely to face situations that tested their faith; female captivity narratives were used in sermons to teach a lesson to those who drifted from their faith. [57]

Rowlandson's narrative reinforced the patriarchal society of Puritan New England. The patriarchy of the family consisted of the husband as the dominant member. Each person within

[56] Toulouse, 38.
[57] Toulouse, 39.

the family had a role to fill; the wife was to be above the children.[58] In the captivity narrative, Mary wrote of the Indians taking her children from her. She said "All was gone, my husband gone…, my children gone, my relations and friends gone, our house and home, and all our comforts within door and without, all was gone except my life and I knew not but the next moment might go too."[59] This disturbed the social structure of the family; everything she had known disappeared and she faced a social order previously unknown to her, not the familiar patriarchy. This narrative reinforced to its readers the dangers of shifting from the structured male-based society. Edmund Morgan, in his book titled *The Puritan Family*, stated, "The essence of the social order lay in the superiority of husband over wife, parents over children, and master over servants, ministers and elders over congregation in the church, rulers over subjects in the state."[60] If any part of this was broken, it disrupted the entire social hierarchy.

Mary Rowlandson's narrative served an important role in society, for both men and women. The men of Puritan society may not have encouraged its publication had they not felt it reinforced their social order and beliefs. Rowlandson was careful in making sure those who read the narrative knew that she was not calling for a change in Puritan culture. She agreed with the customs of the culture and with the social structure she so greatly missed as a captive of the Indians; this made her work distinct from many other women writers. She differed from the outspoken women of society such as Anne Bradstreet, Mary Dyer, and Anne Hutchinson. Later Indian captivity narratives would even challenge the Puritan culture, with the captives returning

[58] Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 38-40.
[59] Rowlandson, 12.
[60] Edmund Morgan, *The Puritan family: Religion & Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England*, (Harper Perennial, 1966), 19.

to the wilderness to live with the Indians.[61] Despite Mary reinforcing the patriarchal society, her work still served to be equally important for women; as the first female non-poetry work published in America, it has had a lasting effect on the history of women in colonial New England.

Colonial women's history is an area that is lacking, with too few historical works covering this area of American history; this fact lends importance to Rowlandson's narrative. It showed a differing perspective of Puritan society than men's historical works; sermons of seventeenth century ministers told a different story of society, giving a male perspective, with women being the quiet and obedient wives. It was a way for them to control society and keep stability over their patriarchal social order. When Rowlandson's narrative became popular, it encouraged other women to write their stories of captivity. This started a movement where women began to have a voice in society.

[61] John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1994), 107-9.

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