

ABSTRACT

PHILLIPS IV, JAMES HENRY. The Lessons of Hunger: Food, Drink, and The Concept of Corrective Affliction In Three Puritan Captivity Narratives. (Under the direction of Dr. Carmine Prioli.)

While scholars have noted the relationship of food and drink imagery in the Puritan captivity narrative genre to corrective affliction, the focus of this study is to provide an extended evaluation of this relationship. By examining the role of hunger in the reconversion experience, discussing the various contexts of hunger in Puritan discourse, and tracing food and drink imagery through several texts, it is the intent of this thesis to show that hunger is the most significant and transformational mode of affliction within the genre. The narratives of Mary Rowlandson, Hannah Swarton, and John Williams will be examined to show how these authors incorporate images of food and drink into their accounts and how hunger figures prominently. Throughout, this thesis will show how hunger—as the central motif of the theme of affliction—is established, imitated, and manipulated.

THE LESSONS OF HUNGER:
FOOD, DRINK, AND THE CONCEPT OF CORRECTIVE AFFLICITION
IN THREE PURITAN CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES

by

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DEDICATION

To Rachel

Thank you for always believing in me.

BIOGRAPHY

James Henry Phillips IV is a North Carolina native who grew up on the coast. Since graduating from high school he has gone on to receive a Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and is currently completing a Graduate Degree in English at North Carolina State University. Upon graduating, James will accept a teaching position at Aulder Academy in Siler City, North Carolina. He currently lives in Raleigh with his wife Rachel and their two dogs.

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Introduction

“And the *First Sin* of man, which Lay in *Eating*, is to be considered...”

Humiliations Follow'd With Deliverances
--Cotton Mather

In a sermon delivered only months after his own return from captivity, Reverend John Williams preached, “It well becomes those who have had eminent mercies, to be shewing to others what great things God has done for them...All our mercies come to us by a divine providence and ordering; not by causality or accident” (94). While Williams’ words are not uncommon in the religious parlance of his day, they are significant with respect to his own manner of “shewing.” He and many others of his time felt compelled to write and publish a narrative of their captivity as a testament to God’s providential power and mercy. Collectively, these accounts make up a significant portion of the captivity narrative genre in American literature.

Of course, not all works considered captivity narratives are strictly religious in theme. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola defines “three distinct phases” of the captivity narrative genre: “authentic religious accounts in the seventeenth century, propagandist and stylistically embellished texts in the eighteenth century, and outright works of fiction in the late eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries” (xii). The scope of this thesis will include works from the first and second of these phases and will examine specifically the religious theme of corrective affliction. Moreover, in addressing the theme of corrective affliction, I will discuss the role of hunger along with images of food and drink in reference to specific texts. The purpose of this study is to understand

how and why images of food and drink serve as the dominant motifs in these early religious accounts of captivity.

While God's mercies may have come by "divine providence and ordering," the narrative accounts of such mercies were products of human agency and, as Gary L. Ebersole writes, "rhetorically and socially negotiated" (73). In the earliest accounts of captivity, Puritan hegemony controlled the language of the narrative and its overriding theme of corrective affliction. For Puritans, corrective affliction was interpreted as God's subtle way of reminding His chosen people of their covenant of grace. Affliction could, and did, come in many forms, including drought, disease, and Indian attack. The causes were equally numerous, but were generally attributed to a community's or individual's wavering attitude towards certain religious practices such as observing the Sabbath or fasting. Beginning with the captivity of Mary White Rowlandson of Lancaster, Massachusetts, in 1676, and the subsequent publication of her account in 1682, Indian captivity was established as the most visible and harrowing manifestation of corrective affliction among New England Puritans, and the captivity narrative as an American literary genre was founded.

The Puritan Genre

The literacy rate among Puritans in both New and Old England was generally high. This distinction was undoubtedly a product of the Protestant expectation that individual laypersons, including children, should be able both to read and understand the Bible for themselves. As Gerald F. Moran and Maris A. Vinovskis write, "many New England Puritans...saw the reading of the Bible as indispensable to [a] child's salvation,

especially in a world still characterized by high infant mortality, and therefore encouraged or even forced their offspring into reading at very early ages” (31). Ironically, this literacy was confined largely to reading little else, with the exception of other theological treatises. Thus, Puritans on both sides of the Atlantic found the emerging captivity narrative genre, which was accepted and, in fact, promoted by the clergy, to be a legitimate form of literature. As Alden T. Vaughn and Edward W. Clark write, “In a society without fiction and plays, and almost barren of poetry, real-life dramas filled a crucial cultural void” (3). Although these narratives offered an alternative to other written forms of Puritan discourse, their message remained, in their earliest forms, staunchly religious.

Although the Puritans were not the first to produce captivity narratives in the New World—Captain John Smith’s account in 1624 is of particular note—they were arguably the first to establish recognizable patterns of recurring structure, tone, and theme within the genre. The intent of these early formulaic narratives was to portray an account of religious conversion or reconversion that could both warn and inspire fellow Puritans. Relating one’s own conversion experience was critical in Puritan orthodoxy and was expected of all who wished to join a congregation. Vaughn explains: “All Puritan factions agreed that a person could not become a member of a church without some assurance that he was elect of God...Such evidence was usually offered in open church session, where the candidate related his own religious wanderings and described the workings of Christ on his soul” (93). Although extreme in comparison to most conversion accounts, the captivity narrative was an accepted form written in the tradition of this orthodox practice. As Vaughn notes, “assurance” was the focal point of this

custom. Yet, for Puritans assurance among God's elect was the eternal hope that could never be absolutely confirmed. Captivity, on the other hand, presented a very real and tangible revelation of assurance to captives, who for the most part felt unworthy of such a rare personal glimpse at God's design for them.

The indication of assurance prompted by captivity and redemption presents a troublesome paradox regarding the intended religious message of the narratives. Assurance, or the signs of assurance, had always been a shared, public and communal experience within Puritan society, and while captivity was unanimously interpreted as God's punishment, the idea of redemption in the wilderness among the heathen challenged the established meaning of public conversion. Tara Fitzpatrick comments on the "atomizing" effect this paradox presented:

It was only natural that redeemed captives would read their deliverance as assurance of God's eternal mercy: they had fulfilled their covenant of grace by admitting their helpless unworthiness, repenting their sins, and devoutly placing their faith in God. The communal covenant, however, had required Puritans to rely on a strict social order and congregational means to reinforce their "moral independence" and to express their utter and collective dependence on God... The wilderness played a paradoxical role: it forced the captives to abandon English ways and adapt to a hostile environment or face starvation and death at the hands of their captors. But separated from their communities and normal existences, those captives who attributed religious significance to their travails saw in captivity an

unprecedented opportunity for an unmediated confrontation with God.

(17)

The paradox inherent in such captivity narratives depicts, perhaps inadvertently, a confessing sinner receiving Puritan society's most coveted indication of God's grace: Puritan New England's version of *felix culpa* perhaps. "No one could be entirely sure as to who was one of the elect," writes *Mayflower* author Nathaniel Philbrick. "As a result, the Puritans were constantly comparing their own actions to those of others, since their conduct might indicate whether or not they were saved" (9). Captivity placed a person's spiritual life under close scrutiny, the effect of which would have been potentially "atomizing," for better or worse. However, despite the subversive nature of some captivity narratives, the Puritan clergy used numerous accounts in the struggle to maintain religious, cultural, and even economic control over New England throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Puritan Hunger

The afflictions described in Puritan captivity narratives vary from text to text. However, in a majority of accounts hunger is focused on as the overriding instrument of God's punishment, and images of food and drink serve as the foremost means through which captives convey their experience. I am curious to know why in such events where family members are killed, property is destroyed, and children are dislocated from parents for years, "the greatest difficulty that deserves the first to be named," as captive Elizabeth Hanson writes, "[is] want of food" (233). Scholars have noted the influence of clerical and biblical sources in Puritan captivity narratives. Looking at hunger in these

two contexts will certainly provide some insight into why images of food and drink are so prevalent in such texts. I would add to this discussion an additional element to the clerical and biblical contexts of hunger and look at the environmental context of hunger in Puritan captivity narratives as well. An understanding of these three will be beneficial in discussing the primary texts I have selected for this thesis.

The threat of hunger and starvation was one of many concerns facing Puritans as they came into the “howling wilderness” of the New World. Peter N. Carroll writes, “Their background provided scant preparation for the difficulties of settling the continent, and only a painful process of trial and error enabled the Puritans to adjust to life in the wilderness” (65). Even after settlements in New England began to flourish, Puritans existed in subsistence agrarian communities where drought and blight could easily bring on hunger. The depictions of hunger in Puritan captivity narratives are based, in part, on this collective anxiety wherein the prospect of starvation is a condition of a frontier environment.

The environmental context of hunger in Puritan discourse can be traced back to the Pilgrims’ arrival in 1620. William Bradford, in his history *Of Plymouth Plantation* (1630-1650), chronicles the near-disastrous disease and hunger at the beginning of the Plymouth colony: “...that which was most sad and lamentable was, that in two or three months time half of their company died...being infected with scurvy and other diseases which this long voyage and their inaccommode condition had brought upon them” (77). When the Plymouth settlers establish a stable food source, Bradford attributes their success to “a special providence of God, and a great mercy to this poor people,” and he asserts that, “the Lord is never wanting unto His in their greatest needs” (66); this despite

vital assistance provided by the local native populations. The Pilgrims' reluctance to attribute survival to native intervention would reemerge as a pattern in Puritan captivity narratives.

Bradford's first-hand account of the perils that the North American wilderness offered was echoed in later Puritan works. Minister and poet Michael Wigglesworth was especially adept at relating environmental disaster and its afflictions to God's wrath. His poem "God's Controversy with New England" bears the heading "Written in the time of the Great Drought, Anno 1662" and carries the line;

This O New-England has thou got

By riot, & excess:

This hast thou brought upon thyself

By pride and wantonness. (31-34)

Just as God had provided for the Pilgrims decades before, so could He be "provoked" to take away, Wigglesworth claimed. "This," referring to the drought, was God's punishment for New England's misplaced devotion to secular pleasures.

Not all hunger born from the wilderness environment was of natural causes, however. When the emigration of Puritans that had flocked to New England throughout the 1630's had virtually ceased due to England's Civil War, the thriving colony suffered an economic crisis. In his journal, John Winthrop recalls the misfortune: "The sudden fall of land and cattle, and the scarcity of foreign commodities, and money, etc., with the thin access of people from England, put many into an unsettled frame of spirit, so as they concluded there would be no subsisting here, and accordingly began to hasten away..."

(414). Food, as Puritan colonists understood, was an unstable commodity controlled by inconsistent weather and inconsistent supplies.

The environmental context of hunger serves an important role in Puritan captivity narratives. Captives are removed from their own domestic settings and thrust into an environment where the odds of starvation are dramatically increased. The idea that these captives are therefore subjected to environmental contingencies beyond their control is significant for the religious aspect of their affliction. The fact that hunger is related by captives as the chief source of affliction underscores a fear engrained long before captivity—a fear rooted in wilderness existence. This form of hunger also reawakens in them a dependency on God.

The biblical or scriptural context of hunger in captivity narratives is perhaps much easier to discern than the environmental. The Bible served as the main source for spiritual guidance, and all Puritans—clergy and laity, men and women, adults and children—were expected to be well versed in scripture. In fact, most Puritans would have memorized much of the Bible, having little else to read and having listened to sermons steeped in scriptural references. Puritan captivity narratives are thus full of biblical references that speak of hunger and other afflictions.

Puritans believed that they were living an allegorical existence based upon the stories of the Bible, in particular the plight of the Jews in the Old Testament. As Ebersole writes, “The practice of reading the happenings in their daily lives through a biblical interpretive frame was very common among the laity...The Puritans had long styled themselves, both rhetorically and emblematically, as *Judea capta*” (32). Indian captivity strengthened this belief and made it “a punishing reality” (32). Biblical

interpretation of captivity made the experience for many Puritan captives an endurable one and, in turn, proved significant to others who read the narratives from the same frame of reference.

As the foundational text for the captivity genre, Mary Rowlandson's account is replete with scriptural references that frame her hunger in a biblical context. In The Fifteenth Remove, Rowlandson writes, "And now I could see that scripture verified (there being many scriptures which we do not take notice of or understand till we are afflicted), Mic. 6:14, 'Thou shalt eat and not be satisfied'" (43). Rowlandson conveys her physical voracity and spiritual emptiness but tempers the depravity of this revelation by presenting it in a scriptural context. Ebersole writes, "While extreme hunger could lead to degradation and the suspension of any moral sense in the rudimentary fight for survival, physical deprivation and suffering could also lead to a fuller appreciation of biblical truths that had earlier seemed remote and little more than words on a page" (37). Rowlandson's scriptural passages present hunger as an affliction of biblical importance and thus mark her own captivity as a symbolic experience for others' edification.

The clerical precedent for hunger in Puritan captivity narratives is perhaps the most visible of the three presented in this thesis. This is due, in part, to the way many accounts of captivity were originally published. It is not uncommon to find captivity narratives printed alongside sermons of humiliation and fasting. The ritual humiliation of fasting was a Puritan rite and appropriately the focus of the sermons delivered during the sometimes week-long ritual. The rhetoric of these sermons was often aimed at accusing congregations of a general lack of conviction. Ministers charged that the fast was observed only in body, but not in spirit. In *Humiliations Follow'd With Deliverances*

Cotton Mather preached, “Fast is but a Form, an Hungry and Empty Form, if we do not therein heartily Repent of our Miscarriages” (20). Subtlety was something the Puritan clergy did not generally employ in their sermons and writing, and the presentation of captivity narratives with fast day sermons was an overt warning to their congregations. Ebersole writes, “Captivity tales were sometimes strategically employed in such context by the clergy in an effort to generate communal spiritual change or reconversion through public fasts and days of humiliation” (63). Whether or not the strategy proved efficient in correcting religious behavior is unknowable perhaps, but the pattern of narrative and sermon published together is an established literary fact.

Mary Rowlandson’s narrative *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* is appended to the last sermon of her husband, Reverend Joseph Rowlandson. The title of the sermon is “A Sermon preached at Weatherfield, Nov. 21. 1678. By Mr. Joseph Rowlandson, it being a day of Fasting and Humiliation” and includes the warning, “Consider there are shrewd signs of God’s intent to leave us, unless somewhat be done” (45). Hannah Swarton’s narrative serves as an appendix to Cotton Mather’s *Humiliations Follow’d With Deliverances*, the latter stating, “The exercises of a Sacred Fast have a particular and peculiar character of Humiliation in them, and we are to Humble our selves with Fasting before the Lord” (16). The hunger both captives experience is intended by the ministerial “sponsors” of their narratives to be seen as fasts of great importance. This importance is therefore meant to inspire others during ritual fasting.

The clerical context of hunger in captivity narratives reveals how Puritan theologians like Cotton Mather controlled the image of captivity. References to food and drink take on a symbolism that extends beyond physical survival. The religious intensity

with which captives endure their actual fast while in captivity serves as a model for congregations partaking in communal fasting.

The contexts for hunger in Puritan discourse provide narrative accounts of captivity with a controlling image. Whether this hunger stems from an environmental, biblical, or clerical source, it serves as the central mode of corrective affliction for those experiencing God's punishment and mercy. In answering "why hunger?" we have to look at the combination of these elements in captivity narratives to understand why images of food and drink become the chief focus for many Puritan captives.

A Review of Scholarship

Although not considered scholarly in the modern sense, the collective work of Puritan theologians Increase Mather and his son Cotton Mather is significant in regards to the captivity narrative genre. Through their efforts, many Puritan accounts of captivity were collected, recorded, and published among volumes of sermons and colonial histories. It has been debated whether or not Increase Mather is the anonymous author of the preface to Mary Rowlandson's narrative. Ebersole writes, "An emerging consensus among scholars points to none other than Increase Mather as the author" (44). Although we cannot assert definitively that the author is Increase Mather, we can cite his influence on the early popularity of Puritan captivity narratives in other works such as *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684). Cotton Mather, whose role in the captivity narrative genre overshadows his father's, takes a more direct approach by including captivity narratives along with his own sermons. In *Humiliations Follow'd With Deliverances* (1697), Mather uses the account of Hannah Duston's captivity to

illustrate the providential power of God: “Now I think I see among you, at this Hour,” Mather preaches, “Three persons, namely Two Women and one Youth who have just now Received a Deliverance from a Captivity in the hands of horrid Indians” (40).

“Horrid Indians” were, in part, the work of the Mathers as well. The Puritan perception that New England’s natives were evil and capable only of treachery was heavily influenced by the writings of both Increase and Cotton Mather. “About King Philip’s War,” writes Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier, “Increase Mather states that the Indians ‘were so *Devil driven* as to begin an unjust and bloody war upon the English, which issued their speedy and utter extirpation from the face of God’s earth’” (61). By portraying Indian captivity as confinement by diabolical forces, the Mathers were able to use the captivity narrative as an instrument of the clergy for discouraging dissenters as well as stereotyping the native Americans. Influenced by Increase and Cotton Mather, Puritans in colonial New England read and discussed captivity narratives as a form of entertainment, but more importantly as a record of God’s providences among His chosen people and a history of their worthy struggle in the wilderness of *their* Eden. The Mathers promoted a narrative form that, in its biases and conservatism, was useful in maintaining Puritan cultural values.

Critical inquiry into the colonial captivity narrative as a literary genre has been, by and large, a modern discussion. With his essay “The Significances of The Captivity Narrative” (1947), Roy Harvey Pearce addresses the literary aspects of the genre in an attempt to move it beyond historicity. “The narrative of Indian captivity has long been recognized for its usefulness in studying our history,” Pearce writes, “and moreover, has achieved a kind of literary status” (1). This literary status has prompted more recent

discussions of the captivity narrative involving issues of gender, authorship, and the impact on American literary tradition. Establishing the captivity narrative as presumably more literary than historical, Pearce lays the groundwork for his discussion of the dynamic nature of the captivity narrative when read as literary fiction. His main caveat in the essay is the reductive treatment captivity narratives often receive, that has, up to now, hidden the significances of the genre:

Certainly there is a natural basic unity of content in the many narratives which we have; but variation in treatment of content, in specific form, and in point of view is so great as to make for several genres, for several significances. Here matters of pure historical fact...and ethnological data—that is, of content abstracted from treatment—are beside the point; what is important is what the narrative was for the readers for whom it was written. The significances of the captivity narrative vary from that of the religious confessional to that of the noisomely visceral thriller. (Pearce 1)

Pearce's request that narratives be read in context and not as works bound necessarily to the parameters of the larger genre presumably created greater scholarly interest in individual authors and texts and the cultural milieu in which each work was written. The body of critical work that has followed helps to define the various "significances" of the genre.

The latter half of the twentieth century saw a considerable increase in captivity narrative scholarship. According to Gordon M. Sayre, "A surge of scholarly interests in the captivity narrative genre came in 1970s, fostered by myth-archetype literary theory. Influenced by the myth and folklore studies of Joseph Campbell and the psychology of

Carl Jung, this theory held that American literature was built on a few archetypal myths..." (16). This theory is of particular interest regarding Puritan captivity narratives, where the archetype is perhaps more apparent than in later captivity narrative forms. Studies of gender and ethnicity in the captivity genre have also thrived and present a wealth of interpretation for many texts. Of the scholarly works consulted for this thesis, a number have proved quite valuable in discussing the role of hunger in Puritan captivity narratives.

A text that speaks to the issue of hunger in the Puritan captivity narrative more directly than any other source I was able locate is Gary L. Ebersole's *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Postmodern Images of Indian Captivity*. Aside from the insightful passages concerning hunger and Puritan hegemony, Ebersole's work explores the cultural impact of the Indian captivity narrative from its earliest forms up through the modern period. Like many captivity narrative scholars, he traces the genre from its use as a religious "jeremiad" to its later manifestations as sentimental fiction. Ebersole also addresses the concepts of identity that the captivity narrative continually reflects upon. A chapter concerning the often debated issue of authenticity is also included. Ebersole provides an excellent critical evaluation of the captivity narrative genre's cultural place and how its position has changed over time.

Scholarly books concerning captivity narratives often come in the form of anthologies, collections of individual accounts supported by critical commentary and historical annotations. *Puritans Among The Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption 1676-1724*, published in 1981 and edited by Alden T. Vaughn and Edward W. Clark is such a work, and addresses those narratives involving Puritan captives,

including the famous account of Mary Rowlandson's captivity. In the "Editor's Preface," Vaughn and Clark state, "This anthology, drawn from the best New England accounts of Indian captivity, presents the captivity narrative at its peak as an American literary phenomenon and as an important expression of Puritan theological and social thought" (vii). Framing this anthology in terms of specific geography, religion, historical period, and as "literary phenomena" is a means of culturally and historically linking the colonial captivity narrative with Puritan mythos. Considering the scope of this thesis, this Vaughn and Clark anthology is an excellent resource.

Another source of critical importance to this thesis is James Arthur Levernier and Hennig Cohen's *The Indians and Their Captives*. This text provides an extensive exploration of the many themes inherent in the captivity narrative genre. Levernier and Cohen are specifically perceptive of the literary element of the narratives revealing how historical accounts of puritan captivity become folded into the mythos of American Romanticism. Many narratives representing a wide range of accounts are found in this text along with detailed introductions and commentary provided by the two editors. Similar to other authors writing on the topic, Levernier and Cohen address the cultural work of the captivity narrative, but do so in a superior manner.

Addressing elements of misinformation and hidden agendas inherent in the captivity narrative genre has become the subject of various scholarly works in recent years. In the preface of *The Indian Captivity Narrative 1550-1900*, coauthors Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier note, "In preparing for this book, we tried to be sensitive to the political nature of many of the captivity narratives, produced as they often were with propagandistic and racist agendas. Such agendas

especially involved negative stereotypes of Native Americans that regrettably remain in the popular imagination and culture even today” (xi). The chapter “Images of Indians,” in the body of the text, further addresses the function of the captivity narrative as racial propaganda wherein the authors write:

What early readers knew about Native Americans was, for the most part, filtered through the perspective of explorers, missionaries, traders, trappers, and captives, who wrote about their experiences with Indians. Predictably, these accounts were in most instances, culturally biased. Such was particularly the case with captivity narratives, whose authors...rarely considered the welfare of the Indian, often harboring ingrained prejudices, not to mention outright personal vendettas, against Native Americans. (52)

While the issues of ethnicity and race are not the prime concern of this thesis, they do affect certain elements of it. Derounian-Stodola & Levernier go on to explain how such stereotypes are folded into fictional accounts of American literature and are thus further embedded in American culture. *The Indian Captivity Narrative 1550-1900*, published in 1993, provides a well-wrought cultural presentation of the images and ideas set in place by early colonial captivity narratives and how this genre reinforced certain stereotypes and contributed to American mythology.

These sources are but a few consulted for this thesis, but they represent a body of work that has greatly assisted my effort in formulating a discussion of Puritan captivity narratives. A complete list of all primary and secondary works cited in the writing of this thesis can be found at the end.

Chapter I

The Recipe for Redemption: The Role of Hunger In *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*

In “The Preface to the Reader” of Mary Rowlandson’s *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (1682), *Per Amicam* [The anonymous “friend”] writes that this narrative is “a pious scope which deserves both commendation and imitation” (Preface). As history has shown, Rowlandson’s text has been both commended and imitated, especially the latter. Her account is commonly viewed as the model on which subsequent texts of the captivity genre, both religious and secular, were written. While Rowlandson’s captivity narrative was not the first to be written in the New World, it has come to represent the genre in American literature as the foundational text. As Gordon M. Sayre explains, this iconic status has been given to Rowlandson’s account “because it was out of New England and her narrative, that Indian captivity literature came to play such a large role in American culture” (127). Similarly, Richard Slotkin writes, “Mrs. Rowlandson’s narrative functions as an archetype, creating a paradigm of personal and collective history that can be discerned as an informing structure throughout Puritan and (with modifications) in later American narrative literature” (102). Given its place in American culture, it is essential to take a close look at Rowlandson’s narrative to determine exactly what aspects of the text resonate within the genre of captivity literature, specifically among the narratives of her own Puritan contemporaries, and to also look at the culture out of which her narrative emerges.

The New England of Mary Rowlandson’s time was dominated by the Puritans, and the cultural milieu in which her captivity occurred undeniably influenced the

language of her narrative. As a Puritan, Rowlandson seizes on the religious significance of captivity in her account, defining the concepts of corrective affliction and conversion (or reconversion) as governing themes. These themes pervaded the religious discourse of her day, and were often the topics of sermons, spiritual autobiographies, and, most importantly, jeremiads. Of all the preexisting literary forms in Puritan society that anticipated and shaped the captivity narrative, jeremiads were perhaps the most influential. As authors Alden T. Vaughn and Edward W. Clark write, “the Puritan captivity narrative owed much of its tone and content to ‘jeremiads’—those peculiar laments by Puritan clergymen...that accused New England of backsliding from the high ideals and noble achievements of the founders, of God’s evident or impending wrath, and of the need for immediate and thorough reform” (7). The theme of Rowlandson’s account, and those that followed, appropriated the message of the jeremiad, but conveyed the urgency of self-examination and reform in a personal narrative that mixed church polity with wilderness fortitude. The captivity narrative, therefore, took on a more literary quality than the jeremiad, which undoubtedly contributed to the former’s popularity among seventeenth and eighteenth-century readers.

We cannot, however, dismiss the important role of the Puritan conversion narrative in shaping the rhetoric of Rowlandson’s account. Donna Campbell comments on the significance of conversion narratives, as well as jeremiads, in Puritan rhetoric and explains that Puritan minister and New England patriarch Thomas Hooker describes the process of conversion as consisting of “contrition, humiliation, vocation, implantation, exaltation, and possession” (Campbell). To conform to Church policy, conversion testimonials took on a structure that followed these six steps. Although these narratives

were traditionally associated with the process of church membership, which Rowlandson would have already undergone at the time of her captivity, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* conveys the possibility, and need, for reconversion. According to Ebersole, conversion “had a specific structure consisting of increasing alienation from God, a growing sense of helplessness, the emergence of self-repugnance, followed by sudden rekindling of faith and renewed sense of hope” (58). As we look at the various stages of Rowlandson’s narrative in this chapter, we will see these elements of the Puritan conversion narrative progress in the context of captivity and affliction. As jeremiads provided Rowlandson with a recognizable theme, conversion narratives afforded her a ready-made structure wherein she could narrate her own experience.

The “high ideals” of the early Puritans in New England were heavily vested in covenant theology, which figured prominently in early jeremiads and conversion narratives, and thus in the rhetoric of Rowlandson’s narrative. In the Calvinist tradition, Puritans believed that not all who professed a belief in God had been “elected” to receive his grace. Who, exactly, were among the elect was unknown, but Puritans believed that possible indications of this sainthood could be observed in a person’s life. Visible signs of assurance among God’s elect were highly regarded in Puritan communities, and seldom went undocumented. Trials of the spirit, temptation, and tragedy were seen by congregations as tests of faith, the outcomes of which were interpreted as either signs of God’s grace or condemnation. As James Levernier and Hennig Cohen write, “Surviving Indian captivity was deemed a sign of God’s favor, perhaps an indication of election” (xviii). At the conclusion of *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, following her redemption, Rowlandson remarks, “Before I knew what affliction meant, I was ready

sometimes to wish for it...I should be sometimes jealous lest I should have my portion in this life" (72). Affliction, as Rowlandson laments in retrospect, was coveted, oddly enough, as it was an indication of God's favor. Although Puritans could never absolutely know whether they were among the elect, comporting themselves in their daily lives with a sense of assurance was the expected mode of behavior. The commitment to maintaining the covenant of grace with God was often an issue of concern within Puritan communities and the impetus for many of the jeremiads. Reestablishing her own covenant with God becomes Rowlandson's spiritual quest during her captivity, and one that is bound to her own physical struggle for survival.

The New England of Mary Rowlandson's time was also one of political and ethnic instability. Although Puritans firmly believed that Indian captivity was God's retribution for the sins of New England's impious, the strained diplomatic relations between British colonists and the native Americans of New England provided, well enough, the social climate needed for such reprisals. The historical circumstances of *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, while somewhat subverted by the religious aim of the text, are equally important elements in discussing Rowlandson's captivity. In her account and other religious narratives, often the greater struggle between "good and evil" tends to overshadow the historical reality of the texts.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, conflicts in both the New and Old World created a continual state of instability for the native American, British, and French inhabitants of North America. The captives taken during these conflicts were prisoners of war—a detail often understated in the accounts of their captivity.

Rowlandson begins the Eighth Remove¹ of her narrative writing, “On the morrow we must go over the River, i.e. Connectiicut, to meet with King Philip” (22). While their subsequent encounters are brief, they prove significant as the days that follow result in an exchange of fortune for the two. Rowlandson is soon redeemed from captivity and Philip is slain. The meeting also reminds us that Rowlandson was not simply an Indian captive, but a prisoner of war. It was a war that, according to authors Eric B. Shultz and Michael J. Tougias, was “among the handful of seminal events that shaped the American mind and continent, yet is perhaps the least studied and most forgotten” (1). Rowlandson’s narrative provides, along with a glimpse into Puritan consciousness, a rare insight into this seemingly neglected chapter in colonial history.

King Philip’s War was the outcome of a simmering conflict that pitted Native American tribes in New England against their English colonial cohabitants in a dispute primarily over land. The events that led to all-out war unfolded much like a Hollywood thriller and included a mysterious death, secret alliances and even courtroom drama. The tragic outcome of the war, however, was very real. Shultz and Tougias report, “Between six hundred and eight hundred English died in battle during King Philip’s War. Measured against a European population in New England of perhaps fifty-two thousand, this death rate was nearly twice that of the Civil War and more than seven times that of World War II” (4). The native American population was devastated even more. “One account estimates that three thousand native Americans were killed in battle,” Shultz and

¹ Rowlandson divides her narrative into twenty “removes,” each describing a different episode of her journey while in captivity. Most scholars see a double meaning in Rowlandson’s use of the term—the common usage: “The act of changing one’s ground, place, or position” (*OED*), and also a religious connotation, implying “removal” from God’s favor. For a complete explanation, see Ebersole, *Capture By Text*, 36.

Tougias write, “In a total population of about twenty thousand, this number is staggering” (5).

Early in the war, the various militias called to defend against and engage the native American enemy waged a passive war of containment presuming that if Philip and his relatively small band of warriors could be kept at bay, hostilities would soon diminish. What the colonial authorities had underestimated were the independent reprisals which sprung up free of Philip’s command throughout New England. An alliance between the Nipmucks and the Narragansett, the latter having historically been sworn enemies of the Wampanoag, proved to be particularly decisive in bringing the war to Lancaster, Massachusetts, and to the home of Mary Rowlandson.

According to Philbrick, the attack on Lancaster that resulted in the captivity of Mary Rowlandson was almost thwarted. Two “Praying Indians,” Job and James, who were serving as spies for the English, infiltrated the Nipmucks’ war party and reported to colonial officials plans of a coming assault. “But the Massachusetts authorities,” Philbrick notes, “chose to dismiss his warnings as the untrustworthy testimony of just another Indian” (287). On the eve of the attack a final desperate warning was offered by Job to Daniel Gookin, The Massachusetts liaison to the “praying Indians”:

Gookin leaped out of bed and sent a dispatch to Marlborough, where Captain Samuel Wadsworth and about forty troops were stationed. The messenger rode all that night, and by morning Wadsworth and his men were riding furiously for Lancaster, about ten miles away. As both James and Job had predicted, the bridge had been burned, but Wadsworth and his troops were able to get their horses across the still-smoldering timbers.

Up ahead the English soldiers could see smoke rising into the sky and hear shouts of the Indians and the firing of muskets. The attack had already begun. (Philbrick 287)

Rowlandson begins her narrative, “On the tenth of February 1675², came the Indians with great numbers upon Lancaster” (2). According to Philbrick, Job had warned Gookin, “four hundred Nipmucks and Narragansetts were about to descend on Lancaster” (287). Joseph Rowlandson, Mary’s husband and minister of Lancaster, was, as she wrote in her narrative, “in the Bay” (6) meaning Boston, where he was petitioning the Governor for additional troops to guard Lancaster from Indian attacks. The attack on Lancaster during his absence served as tragic evidence to his claim, but action would come slowly from a colonial government that had underestimated the scope of the war.

Whether by the providential hand of God, or simply the direct will of her captors, Mary Rowlandson experiences horrendous affliction according to *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*. For her, there is little doubt that this suffering is divine chastisement brought about by her own spiritual malaise. Rowlandson writes in the “Third Remove” how God’s wrath, and eventual mercy, is justified:

I then remembered how careless I had been of God’s holy time; how many Sabbaths I had lost and misspent, and how evilly I had walked in God’s sight; which lay so closely upon my spirit, that it was easy for me to see how righteous it was with God to cut off the thread of my life, and cast me out of his presence forever. Yet the lord still showed mercy to me, and

² Rowlandson dates the year of her captivity according to the Julian calendar, not the Gregorian. Concordantly, the attack on Lancaster occurred the twentieth of February, 1676. See Vaughn and Clark, *Puritans Among The Indians*, p. 33, n.1.

upheld me; and as he wounded me with one hand, so he healed me with the other. (9)

According to her narrative, God wounds Rowlandson through various physical and emotional afflictions, including destruction of property, death of family members and neighbors, dislocation from surviving family, assimilation, cold, and hunger. Several scholars have claimed one form of affliction over others as being the most thematically significant. Slotkin argues that the dislocation of family figures most prominently in Rowlandson's experience, citing the "trauma of emigration," implicit in early Puritan consciousness, as the source:

The fact that the break up of families is at the center of the trial by captivity suggests something of the state of the Puritan mind during the period of captivity narratives. The trauma of emigration centered on the emotional consequences of their leaving the ancestral home voluntarily, doing violence to the ties of blood, friendship, and custom...These narratives imply that unwilling captivity is the only acceptable excuse for going into the wilderness—that the Puritans themselves were "captives" of the prelates, forced by them to leave a happy English home for a howling wilderness. (108)

Slotkin's claim, that Rowlandson frames her captivity in the context of the larger Puritan historical plight, in which the fragmentation of family is significant, is certainly a well-founded reading of the narrative. However, his claim that this fragmentation "is at the center of the trial by captivity" ignores a form of affliction that figures more prominently

in the narrative and one linked closer to Puritan consciousness than the trauma of emigration.

Addressing the issue of affliction in *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* from a slightly different approach, Deronian-Stodola and Levernier look briefly beyond the text to argue that Rowlandson's true affliction comes from being a survivor. They write: "During and immediately after her captivity, Rowlandson seems to have suffered from the trauma akin to what is now termed the 'survivor syndrome,' but to have minimized the symptoms to conform to the Puritan doctrine of providential affliction" (102).

Among the examples Deronian-Stodola and Levernier use to point to the symptoms of "survivor syndrome" in Rowlandson's narrative, is the image in the "Twentieth Remove" of an insomnia-plagued Rowlandson who seems to struggle with the role of redeemed captive: "I can remember the time, when I used to sleep quietly without working in my thoughts, whole nights together, but now it is otherwise with me...O the wonderful power of God that mine eyes have seen, affording matter enough for my thoughts to run it, that when others are sleeping mine eyes are weeping" (Rowlandson 71). Admittedly, the tone of this passage does leave some question as to Rowlandson's psychological state, and calls into question the sincerity of her affirmation, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" (73). However, if we consider the rhetorical effect of Rowlandson's altered state in a didactic context, we find her words to be the confirmation of a hard-learned lesson. As Gary L. Ebersole explains, Rowlandson's tears "are not tears shed in despair or anxiety over the future, but tears shed out of the deep knowledge of God's power and goodness" (43). Deronian-Stodola and Levernier's argument, that Rowlandson "strives to convince herself of the providential role of suffering," (104) while actually struggling

as a victim of “survivor syndrome,” provides a plausible analysis of affliction outside the narrative, but one that denies that affliction its corrective purpose within the instructional framework of the Puritan captivity genre.

The affliction of hunger is the most pervasive form of suffering in Mary Rowlandson’s captivity narrative, and while scholars, including Slotkin and Deronian-Stodola and Levernier, refer to food and starvation in their respective commentaries on Rowlandson’s work, they undervalue the thematic role hunger occupies in the text and its impact on other Puritan captivity narratives. While hunger has long been a metaphor in religious writing used to associate the physical to the spiritual, Rowlandson’s narrative establishes its role in the Puritan captivity genre as *the* principal form of corrective affliction—the divine chastisement by God meant to test one’s faith and bring about (re)conversion. The affliction of hunger and the continual references to food and drink provide the narrative with its most complete set of imagery, and a narrative framework in which the dual trials of body and spirit can be seen as interrelated. At every significant point in Rowlandson’s narrative we find the images of food and drink conveying the lesson of hunger.

When we identify *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* as an instructional religious meditation on corrective affliction and reconversion, we must first look at the various stages of Rowlandson’s captivity, to discern how physical hunger is translated into spiritual growth. In rudimentary terms, the structure of Rowlandson’s narrative consists of captivity, affliction, and redemption. Yet, if we observe the stages of hunger Rowlandson describes in her narrative, and how they correspond to her spiritual state, we find a more complex pattern of events.

At the onset of her captivity, Rowlandson experiences a period of physical deprivation, first brought on by an initial absence of food, followed by a reluctance to eat what her captors provide. In the “Third Remove,” just before her child Sarah’s death, she writes, “It may be easily judged what a poor feeble condition we were in, there being not the least crumb of refreshing came within either of our mouths from Wednesday night to Saturday night except only a little cold water” (9). This period of near physical starvation mirrors the void that exists in her faith at the beginning of her ordeal. The extent of Rowlandson’s spiritual despair at this point is conveyed by an a reference to suicide, wherein she remembers, “I have thought since on the wonderful goodness of God to me in preserving me in the use of my reason and sense in that distressed time, that I did not use wicked and violent means to end my own miserable life” (11). What seems to arrest Rowlandson’s spiritual decline and save her from utter faithlessness in this early part of the narrative is the unlikely gift of a Bible, looted from another town and given to her by one of her captors. Reading the passage, “Thus saith the Lord, ‘Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy [Jer.31:16],’” Rowlandson asserts, “was a sweet cordial to me when I was ready to faint” (17). Rowlandson’s metaphor of scripture-as-sustenance provides the first reference in the narrative that equates the spiritual with the physical.

This first stage of hunger corresponds with Hooker’s prescribed steps of conversion, as well as Ebersole’s description of the conversion narrative structure. Rowlandson, forced to examine her spiritual state as a result of her afflictions, has experienced contrition, and the beginning of humiliation, as a direct result of hunger. She

has certainly been alienated from God, both physically and spiritually, accompanied by a feeling of helplessness whereby her depraved condition is brought into focus. In the spirit of the conversion narrative, Rowlandson interprets these events as the beginnings of a transformative experience that will bring her close to God once again.

Following the spiritual awakening she experiences, Rowlandson moves into a new stage of hunger characterized by a voracious appetite and willingness to eat what was formerly inedible. In “The Fifth Remove” Rowlandson explicitly points to this transition:

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 my stomach would turn against this or that and I could starve or dy before I could eat such things, yet they were sweet and savoury to my taste. (19)

This second phase of hunger in Rowlandson’s narrative is perhaps the most significant concerning her reconversion, as scholars have debated over what her voracity signifies. Deronian-Stodola and Levernier suggest that Rowlandson’s gradual acceptance of, and desire for, the food she is offered is an indication of her acculturation to native customs, and their “savage” means of survival:

Indoctrinated by her Puritan background to hate Indians, Rowlandson had difficulty consciously admitting a certain respect and even liking for her Indian captors. She therefore displaces her gradual acceptance of Indian culture onto her description of Indian food. At first unable to “stomach”

their meals, Rowlandson eventually finds them so “savoury” that she is literally willing to steal food from “the Mouth and Hand” of “one of the *English Children*,” thus revealing the extent of her growing subconscious identification with her captors. (93)

Again, Deronian-Stodola and Levernier posit an interesting explanation for Rowlandson’s actions, but one that is unsubstantiated by the text. Throughout the narrative, Rowlandson remains fervent in her belief that God provides her with sustenance, and makes this sustenance palatable, never once indicating empathy towards her captors. As Ebersole writes, such a claim would seriously undermine Rowlandson’s purpose of focusing on the affliction of hunger:

While recognizing that her desire to live drives her to eat things she never would have touched before, Mary finally backs away from simply declaring that humans can and will do anything in order to survive.

Instead, she presses on to maintain that it is God who has sustained her. It could be argued that this rhetorical move merely keeps her from having to face the truth, but to hold this position requires one largely to ignore the extent to which she inhabited (and had incorporated) the Puritan worldview. That is, one would have to argue that her real experience was outside or independent of the Puritan world of meaning, something that is unacceptable. (39)

As Ebersole (whose commentary regarding Rowlandson’s use of food and drink imagery provides the most substantial and compelling material on the subject) explains, Rowlandson’s voracity cannot be interpreted as either identifying with her captors or

even the natural impulse of survival. This would imply that Rowlandson is a free agent whose continued existence is contingent on what she alone can endure by maintaining her physical body. As for her most “savage” act—the stealing of food from the English child in the “Eighteenth Remove”—we must note that Rowlandson never expresses guilt over this deed, but focuses rather on the ability of God to make it so. She claims: “Thus the Lord made that pleasant and refreshing, which any other time would have been an abomination” (46). The “abomination” can be linked to both the food and the act—here Rowlandson claims that God sanctions both. Keeping in mind the emblematic purpose food and drink hold in Rowlandson’s narrative, we must consider her voracity in the context of the reconversion experience.

Perhaps the most significant symptom of Rowlandson’s voracity is the inability to satiate her hunger, despite the increased availability of food and the improvement of her appetite. In the “Fifteenth Remove,” she claims, “For though sometimes it fell out that I got enough and did eat until I could no more, yet I was as unsatisfied as when I began. And now I could see that scripture verified...Micah vi. 14, *Thou shalt eat and not be satisfied*” (43). At this point in the text, Rowlandson has come to terms with the spiritual aspect of her affliction. She now sees that hunger is a symptom of both her physical and spiritual depravity—an affliction that can be removed only through the grace of God. Ebersole writes, “This emptiness could not be filled by physical sustenance any more because a full realization of the ultimate contingency of human existence, marked by the elemental needs of the body, had brutally imposed itself on her consciousness” (37). Rowlandson is transformed by hunger and realizes the religious import of this particular

affliction above all others. She has become acutely aware of the limitations of worldly things—what she calls “the Vanity of vanities” (76).

Yet, we must see Rowlandson’s condition in contrast to her pre-captive state of religious complacency. The deprivation of food, followed by the developing voraciousness of her appetite, for which there is no satisfaction, is a clear metaphor for how Rowlandson is to live her “redeemed” religious life. Satisfaction might breed spiritual idleness and Rowlandson could return to sin, like “the dogs that return to their own vomit,” (15) as Cotton Mather writes. The concentration with which Rowlandson attempts to satisfy her physical hunger during captivity, becomes the acute spiritual awareness of her redemption. Therefore, in this second stage of hunger, she progresses through the steps of vocation and implantation, acknowledging that her own efforts are to no avail without the grace of God, and comes to understand the lesson of her humiliation.

The third and final stage of Rowlandson’s hunger begins with her redemption from captivity and is punctuated by the images of communion. Rowlandson’s references to bread and wine in the final remove of her narrative are significant in several respects. Communion is important in the conventional sense: “Participation in the Christian sacrament of the Lord’s Supper” (*OED*), whereby Rowlandson is spiritually redeemed, or as Ebersole writes, “the restoration of a proper divine-human relationship” (41) is achieved. However, as Ebersole goes on to comment, bread not only symbolizes the divine in Rowlandson’s account, but also represent the line between the two worlds of her narrative: “Bread represents the basic food that sustains life (or the body) in the civilized world, as well as the material goods and comforts Rowlandson had enjoyed in New England before her abduction and again after her redemption. Bread is also what she

lacked during her captivity" (Ebersole 41). Bread, as Ebersole argues, becomes the strongest food image of the text, signifying not only the Eucharist in Rowlandson's third stage of hunger, but also the symbol for both her removal from Puritan society as well as her restoration. At the conclusion of the narrative, a redeemed Rowlandson recalls her concern while in captivity, that she may never again have bread: "It was then hard work to persuade myself that I should ever be satisfied with bread again" (74).

However, bread and wine, as components of the Lord's Supper, can also be used as a metaphor for Rowlandson's own conversion experience. While she does not cast herself as a Christ figure, the metaphor of affliction that links the corporeal with the spiritual figures prominently in the text. I would argue that Rowlandson's use of communion imagery upon her redemption is meant to reinforce the religious significance of her experience. Not only is her transformation one involving the body and the spirit, but, given the significance of captivity in Puritan culture, her renewed covenant with God, signified by communion, now carries the implication of assurance. This third and final stage of Rowlandson's hunger completes the spiritual progression of her reconversion. Her redemption signifies the phase of exaltation, and the final passages of her narrative speak to her state of possession. Rowlandson's religious spirit has been reinvigorated, ironically enough, through a process of deprivation.

The stages of hunger Rowlandson describes in her narrative chronicle both the physical trial of the body, and, more importantly, the spiritual transformation of her soul. Examining these stages in the framework of the conversion narrative, we can see how significant hunger and the images of food and drink are to Rowlandson's rhetoric. The

transformation from physical voracity to spiritual reconversion that the stages of her hunger illustrate serve as the pattern for subsequent narratives.

In the introduction to this thesis, I discussed three contexts in which hunger is prefigured in Puritan captivity narratives. In exploring the stages of hunger in the narrative, we have already looked at two examples of Rowlandson citing biblical passages to narrate the affliction of hunger. The Bible, as both a tangible item in the narrative, and an implicit part of Rowlandson's frame of reference, is appropriately the main source of allusions concerning hunger in her account. We should now see how this assessment applies to clerical and environmental elements in the text.

The influence of Puritan clergy is easily discerned in Rowlandson's captivity narrative. To see the workings of clerical hands, one has to look no further than the preface and appendix of the early editions of *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (concurrently published in London under the title *A True History of The Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*). As I have noted, Increase Mather is believed to have penned the “Preface to The Reader” of Rowlandson’s text, while Mary’s husband, Reverend Joseph Rowlandson, provided the sermon appended to the narrative. The sermon was originally preached on a “day of Fasting and Humiliation,” and its addition to the narrative further emphasizes the role of hunger in spiritual matters in Puritan discourse.

However, the clerical influence runs deeper than the two “bookends” of Rowlandson’s narrative. The clearest evidence of a ministerial voice within the text, concerning hunger, involves Michael Wigglesworth. Wigglesworth was a clergyman and poet, whose *Day of Doom*, published in 1662, proved an immensely popular work among

New England Puritans. Rowlandson, however, looks to the poem “Vanity of Vanities,” published alongside *Day of Doom*, as describing the lesson of hunger. Although the title presumably comes from the Old Testament, Ecclesiastes 1:2: “‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher, ‘Vanity of vanities! All is vanity’³,” we can see the language of Wigglesworth’s poem resonate in *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*. In describing the impermanence of man’s worldly wealth, Wigglesworth uses the phrase, “A Wind, a Flower, a Vapor, and a Bubble/ A shadow of something but truly naught indeed” (5,8). Rowlandson evokes similar images to narrate the lesson of her captivity. In the “Twentieth Remove” she writes, “The Lord hath shewed me the vanity of these outward things. That they are the *Vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit*; that they are but a shadow, a blast, a bubble, and things of no continuance; that we must rely on God himself, and our whole dependence must be upon him” (76). As we have already seen in the narrative, it is Rowlandson’s inability to quell her own hunger that generates the rediscovery of this divine dependence. In “Vanity Of Vanities,” Wigglesworth writes:

As in a Dropsy, drinking drought begets,
 The more he drinks the more he still requires,
 So on this World whoso affection sets,
 As Wealth’s increase, increaseth his desires. (29-32)

Wigglesworth’s metaphor, equating a physical condition to a spiritual one, is essentially the same conceit Rowlandson uses to describe her own voracious hunger during captivity. As the wife of a minister and a learned person in her own right, Rowlandson

³ See New American Standard. 1990. p. 666

would have almost certainly read Wigglesworth's poetry. The intertextual nature of the conclusion to her narrative seems to suggest this clerical influence.

The environmental context of hunger prefigured in Puritan discourse is less apparent in Rowlandson's narrative than that of the biblical and clerical contexts. However, as I suggest in the introduction, the threat of starvation would have been inherent in the minds of New England Puritans as they well understood that hunger was contingent, in part, upon certain environmental factors. Rowlandson expresses this anxiety during her captivity by relating what she perceives as gluttonous or wasteful consumption by her captors. Immediately following the attack on Lancaster and her abduction, Rowlandson relates how the native Americans wastefully gorge themselves on the bounty of the town: "miserable was the waste that was there made, of horses, cattle, sheep, swine, calves, roasting pigs, and fowl, (which they had plundered in the town,) some roasting, some lying and burning, and some boiling, to feed out merciless enemies, who were joyful enough, though we were disconsolate" (6). Ebersole has noted the biblical significance of this scene (30), but I would also point to it as an indication of Rowlandson's fear of hunger. The animals represent a stable source of sustenance, and an element of the "civilized" world Rowlandson is forced to abandon. Now, she fears, she has fallen victim to the "vast and desolate wilderness"(7).

In the "Seventh Remove" Rowlandson again comments on the inability to stake her survival on a stable food source. When she and her captors come across an abandoned field where some corn and wheat still stands, Rowlandson laments, "A solemn sight methought it was to see the fields of wheat and Indian corn forsaken and the remainders of them to be food for our merciless enemies" (22). Though here she scorns

the English farmers for perhaps inadvertently providing sustenance to the “enemy,” Rowlandson’s thoughts are still focused on the “savage” ways her captors go about gathering food.

Ironically, this vigilant scavenging, which Rowlandson will eventually embrace, serves as the motivation for her spiritual change. As the narrative bears out, the anxiety about hunger—as a condition of wilderness existence—focuses Rowlandson’s attention on the significance of food and drink. The environmental context of hunger in Puritan consciousness predisposes Rowlandson to see her ordeal in the terms of physical and spiritual depravity. Following her redemption from captivity, she describes how God’s affliction was delivered upon her: “like a sweeping rain that leaveth no food” (75). Framing her affliction in such terms reveals how hunger is prefigured for Rowlandson in an environmental context.

In this chapter we have seen how significant a role hunger plays in Mary Rowlandson’s captivity narrative. By examining the stages of her hunger in relation to the process of Puritan conversion, we can now appreciate the religious importance of Rowlandson’s affliction. We can also trace the clerical, biblical, and environmental roots of hunger in Puritan discourse, and point to these influences in the text. Perhaps most important, however, we have established the lesson of hunger in Rowlandson’s narrative that makes her account foundational in the genre of captivity literature.

Chapter II

Hunger of the *Inward and Outward Man* in
“A Narrative of Hannah Swarton containing Wonderful Passages,
relating to her Captivity and Deliverance”

A mere fifteen years separates the publication of Mary Rowlandson’s captivity narrative *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, in 1682, and Cotton Mather’s sermon *Humiliations follow’d with Deliverances*, in 1697. Yet, in reading “A Narrative of Hannah Swarton containing Wonderful Passages, relating to her Captivity and Deliverance,” which Mather published with *Humiliations*, it is clear that Rowlandson’s foundational text had already begun to shape the Puritan captivity narrative genre. Although the religious and political setting of New England had significantly changed during the brief time between the two narratives, resulting in different scenarios of captivity, we find Swarton framing her narrative with the same theme, structure, and rhetorical strategies Rowlandson employs in her narrative. The role of hunger, central to Rowlandson’s text, figures prominently in Swarton’s account of captivity, as do the various stages of hunger and conversion. In looking at Swarton’s narrative, we will discover how, despite significant variations in captivity circumstances, the text successfully maintains the lesson of hunger set forth by Rowlandson.

In the waning years of the seventeenth century, the hostility between the English and French fighting in Europe found its way to the New World. In the wake of William of Orange’s ascension to England’s throne, Protestants and Catholics on both sides of the Atlantic fought in what was called The War of Grand Alliance, referred to in the colonies as King William’s War. The conflict in North America pitted French colonists and their native allies against an English population still recovering from King Philip’s War,

fought a decade or so earlier. In the Spring of 1690, the battle came to Casco Bay, present day Portland, Maine. Here a force of French and Abenaki Natives laid siege to the town's fort, forcing surrender. Robert Leckie describes the event:

Promised quarter, the garrison surrendered, marching out to lay down their arms as required—only to be overwhelmed by the Indians. Try as the French officers might, and they did try, knowing full well that the enraged red men could not be restrained, even though they struck them with the flat of their swords, many an Englishmen perished in the pursuing massacre. Quite a few survived however, only to be carried off as prisoners. (192)

Among the many taken prisoner and sent to Canada were Hannah Swarton and those members of her family fortunate enough to be spared during the attack. Held in captivity for over five years, Swarton was eventually redeemed and, in the tradition of Mary Rowlandson, shared the story of her captivity for the edification of her fellow Puritans. The affliction of hunger Swarton endures depicts a conversion experience akin to her literary predecessor, but unlike Rowlandson, Swarton is captive to both native and French—threats to what she calls her “outward” and “inward man,” respectively.

To begin our discussion of Swarton’s narrative, it is important to briefly address the critical debate over authorship. While this dispute is not the focus of this chapter, it is, nevertheless, integral to any discussion of Swarton’s text because it can determine the degree of influence the clergy had in the production of Puritan captivity narratives. Cotton Mather is the undisputed patron and publisher of Hannah Swarton’s account. However, the controversy lies in whether the narrative was altered by Mather, and if so,

to what extent. Vaughn and Clark write, “there is no way of knowing how much Mather altered Swarton’s original account—no copy of it survives—but the abundant and precise biblical quotations suggest a clerical hand. So too, perhaps, does the unusual emphasis on captivity as a punishment for rejecting civil and ecclesiastical society” (148). Similarly, James Levernier and Hennig Cohen suggest that “[the narrative’s] wealth of scriptural allusions is typical of [Mather’s] style and suggests that he, rather than Mrs. Swarton, wrote it” (31). In response to these claims, Gary L. Ebersole writes:

The Bible was studied regularly by most Puritans, both in collective ritual settings and in private. Indeed, the Bible permeated almost all forms of Puritan discourse, oral and written. To imply that only the clergy has “precise” control of biblical passages is to draw too sharp a distinction between the clergy and the laity on this score...the Vaughn-Clark position strips the ordinary men and women of their basic human dignity by denying that they, too, could be hermeneuts in their own right. (78)

To Ebersole’s argument, I would add, first, that following the line of reason Vaughn and Clark and Levernier and Cohen take would also call into doubt Rowlandson’s authorship; and, as we saw in the previous chapter, Rowlandson incorporates biblical scripture as well as clerical phrasing into her narrative, yet her role as author never comes into dispute. Considering the presence of her minister husband, along with Increase Mather, I would argue that her narrative is more disposed to a direct, “clerical hand” than Swarton’s. Second, the intertextual nature of Puritan captivity narratives makes it difficult to judge authorship based upon a specific style of writing or idiom. Considering the fact that Puritan captives were limited to the Bible, sermons, and

religious histories for rhetorical fashioning, should it be surprising that these sources figure so prominently in their narratives? Lastly, short of judging this debate completely irrelevant, I would point to the Puritan notion of authorship in contrast to the modern, secular concept. While fame, and perhaps wealth, may have been the outcome of some Puritan captivity narratives, the incentive to write and publish a religious account of captivity was not. Therefore, the debate over who actually wrote the narrative is doubtless of less importance than the intended message. However, as Ebersole claims, we cannot deny a captive her right to interpretation, and therefore, because it is *her* captivity experience, I will refer to the primary text in this chapter as Swarton's narrative.

The question of authorship aside, few will dispute the rigid interpretation of captivity Swarton provides in her narrative. Though clearly modeled on Rowlandson's belief that her captivity is a result of neglecting a covenant with God, Swarton's account provides a more immediate link between her actions and her affliction. As Vaughn and Clark write, "more directly than most New Englander narrators, Swarton interpreted her ordeal as God's punishment for her own shortcomings; she belatedly concluded that her remove from an orderly, pious town to a frontier settlement with little civil government and no church had been for worldly rather than godly ends" (148). In Puritan terms, Swarton had violated her covenant with God, by moving beyond the protective "Hedge" of her Puritan community, the results of which were captivity and the humiliation of hunger.

The concept of a "Hedge" had existed in Puritanism from its earliest days in England. As Peter N. Carroll explains, "The Puritans articulated the sense of God's grace upon a country with the metaphor of the 'Hedge,' a protective wall which surrounded a

people and assured them that the Lord would not forsake that nation” (17). After establishing this Hedge in New England, staunch Puritans fought a constant battle against secular growth and fragmentation, which, as they perceived, threatened the protective and controlling power of Puritan hegemony and invited the wrath of God. The Synod of 1679-1680 sought to explain the recent causes of God’s chastisement of New England, and named the offense Swarton would later confess to as a source:

There hath been in many professors an insatiable desire after land and worldly accommodations, yea, so as to forsake churches and ordinances, and to live like heathen, only that so they might have elbow-room enough in the world. Farms and merchandising have been preferred before the things of God. In this respect, the interests of New England seemeth to be changed... (Synod 311)

Echoing this sentiment, at times almost *verbatim*, Swarton’s narrative serves as a confession and warning to those with the desire to move beyond the Hedge for worldly gain. “I had Left the Public Worship and Ordinances of God,” she recalls, “And this we did for large Accommodations in the World, thereby Exposing our Children to be bred Ignorantly like Indians and ourselves to forget what we had been formerly instructed in” (55). Abiding by the theme and structure of Rowlandson’s narrative, Swarton follows her own confession with an account of her afflictions at the hands of God.

The pattern of hunger established by Mary Rowlandson’s narrative is closely emulated by Swarton in her account. Early in her captivity, she writes, “For the first times, while the enemy feasted on our provisions, I might have had some with them, but then I was so filled with sorrow and tears that I had little stomach to eat, and when my

stomach was come, our English food was spent" (52). Similar to Rowlandson in her experience, Swarton observes the "feasting" of palatable food, but is unable to partake. Her initial lack of appetite is then coupled with a lack of food, as her native captors also begin to suffer from starvation: "One time my Indian mistress and I were left alone while the rest went to look for eels, and they left us no food from Sabbath-day morning till the next Saturday, save that we had a bladder (of moose I think) which was well filled with maggots; and we boiled it and drank the broth, but the bladder was so tough we could not eat it" (54). As with Rowlandson's affliction, Swarton's extreme hunger yields a spiritual awakening, forcing her to evaluate her depraved state, and to begin the initial stages of reconversion. Consuming barely enough to survive the continual march into Canada, Swarton accepts her affliction: "I must justify the Lord in all that has befallen me, and acknowledge that He hath punished me less than my Iniquities deserved" (56). She also credits God for her ability to continue, despite being "faint for want of food" (53), recalling Rowlandson's claim of being both "wounded" and "healed" by the hands of God.

The most striking difference between Swarton's captivity experience and Rowlandson's is that she is held by both native and French captors. The significance of this dual threat does not escape Swarton. In her narrative, she rhetorically locates the physical and spiritual trials that Rowlandson endures on a metaphorical plane, onto the material circumstances of her own captivity. Upon being bought into servitude by a French woman, Swarton claims:

I was kindly entertained by the lady and had French clothes given me with good diet and lodging and was carried thence unto the hospital where I

was physicked and blooded and very courteously provided for. Here was a great comfort and change as to my *Outward man* in my freedom from my former Hardships and Hardhearted Oppressors. But here began a greater snare and trouble to my soul and danger to my *Inward man*. For the Lady, my Mistress, the Nuns, the Priests, the Friars and the rest set upon me with all the strength of *Argument* they could from *Scripture*, as they interpreted it, to perswade me to Turn *Papist*. (62)

While Swarton's dichotomy of *inward* and *outward* men may not be as rhetorically sophisticated and subtle as Rowlandson's embedded, dual narrative, the effect is similar.

Considering Swarton's "dual" captivity, Levernier and Cohen suggest that her narrative can be seen as three trials: "a trial at the hands of the Indians, which is essentially physical; a trial of faith at the hands of the French, which, although they treated her kindly, she recognized as a 'Captivity among the papists'; and an inner trial, resulting from the combined experience" (32). The problem with this analysis is that it interprets these trials in a dialectical manner. Despite the arrangement, constructed by the events of Swarton's captivity, where the trials of the body and spirit are made to seem exclusive, we must consider them to be part of a complete experience. In other words, we must see that the physical hunger psychologically prepares Swarton for the spiritual trial among the "papists," and the spiritual hunger sustains her while she starves among the natives. To interpret Swarton's affliction as "an inner trial *resulting* from the combined experience," as Levernier and Cohen state, denies her ability to simultaneously interpret the significance of hunger during her captivity.

In Rowlandson's second stage of hunger, we observe the transformation from starvation to voracity. Following this shift, Rowlandson becomes acutely aware that although the threat of starvation has been diminished, her spiritual salvation remains in jeopardy. With Swarton's removal from native to French captors, we observe a similar phenomenon. Like Rowlandson, Swarton busies herself with the "work" of survival. Her wish to be ransomed to the French is arguably the best example of her efforts to escape affliction. When she first arrives in Canada, Swarton is sent to French homes by her native captors to "beg victuals for them," and is met with kindness: "[I] found the *French* very kind to me, giving me Beef, and Pork, and *Bread*, which I had been without, near nine months before; so that now, I found a great Change as to Diet" (60). There is little doubt that the food Swarton is given upon arrival factors into her being "perswaded" to go to Quebec. As she discovers, however, the physical comforts of French customs coincide with "the threat to her inward man"—i.e., Roman Catholicism. In keeping with Rowlandson's narrative, and the steps of conversion, Swarton is forced to acknowledge that her complete salvation, body and soul, is not contingent upon her "works," but by God's grace alone.

Swarton's complete reconversion comes to fruition while she remains in captivity. After she successfully defends herself against the pressure to convert to Catholicism, she begins to doubt the validity of her own faith, claiming, "I have had many Conflicts in my own Spirit; fearing that I was not truly *Converted* unto God in Christ...I was neither fit to Live, nor fit to Die; and brought to the very pit of Despair" (66). Swarton's spiritual state, at this low point in her captivity, is reminiscent of Rowlandson's, and as in Rowlandson's ordeal, this despair is conquered by scripture.

Swarton writes: “I had gotten an English Bible...and settled on the prayer of *Jonah*, and those Words, *I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet will I Look again towards thy Holy Temple*” (67). Not only is the choice of scripture very close to the one Rowlandson cites in her own narrative, but Swarton’s physical response of “Ravishing Comfort” to this verse is also comparable. In fact, we can see how Swarton replaces her physical hunger for food and drink with the spiritual hunger for scripture and biblical truths. The latter portion of her captivity is replete with scripture, both memorized and read from her Bible. This renewal of faith leads Swarton to reconversion: “Now I thought God was my God, and my Sins were pardoned in Christ; and now I thought, I could *Suffer* for Christ, yea *Dye* for Christ, or do anything for Him” (67). Ultimately, she believes as Rowlandson does, that “it was Good for me to be here,” (67) and therefore learn the lesson of hunger God’s affliction has provided.

In contrast to Rowlandson’s description of redemption, wherein the images of bread and wine convey a physical and spiritual restoration, Swarton’s words are brief and focus more upon her two unredeemed children. She does, however, attribute her own deliverance to the workings of God: “I desire to *Praise the Lord for His Goodness, and for His wonderful works to me*” (72). Her conviction of her reconversion is also unquestionable, and, as Ebersole notes, serves as “an important public rite of reincorporation into the society of Visible Saints” (80). Captivity had wrought a certain brand of affliction on Swarton, for a specific sin.

With Hannah Swarton’s account, we can see how important the role of hunger had become in narrating the affliction of captivity. The images of food and drink, used in her narrative to convey the trials of the inward and outward man, reiterate the metaphor

of hunger established in Mary Rowlandson's text. Reading Swarton's narrative in the context of Rowlandson's account shows how hunger becomes established as the central mode of affliction in Puritan captivity narratives.

Chapter III

“I never wanted a meal’s meat.”
 Controlling The Image of Captivity in
The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion

“The history I am going to write proves that days of fasting and prayer, without reformation, will not avail to turn away the anger of God from a professing people.”

—Rev. John Williams,
*The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*⁴

Nearly a quarter of a century after the publication of *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (1682), a party of Native Americans allied with the French attacked Deerfield, Massachusetts. Settled on what was then the colonial frontier, Deerfield had long been a place of instability where Native American and French attacks were frequent. Among the many captives taken during the raid of 1704 was the Reverend John Williams who, upon being redeemed in 1706 after nearly three years of captivity, began the work of recording his own account. *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion. A Faithful History of Remarkable Occurrences in the Captivity and the Deliverance of Mr. John Williams, Minister of the Gospel* was first published in 1707 and printed in Boston by Bartholomew Green. Rivaling the fame of Mary Rowlandson’s narrative, Williams’ account was published six times in the Eighteenth Century and five in the nineteenth.⁵ Aside from its popularity, *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion* is significant for its contrasting portrayal of affliction. Unlike his captive forebears, Williams does not experience hunger, and the images of food and drink in his narrative provide a very different portrayal of captivity.

⁴ In this chapter, I will be citing the Sixth Edition of *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*, published in 1795.

⁵ See Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive*, 51.

Williams' captivity occurred during Queen Anne's War. After the death of William of Orange in 1702, Anne Stuart, daughter of James II and sister to Mary, became England's reigning monarch. That same year, the War of Spanish Succession began. According to Leckie, "it was a commercial war to the death," and, it "broke out because King Louis claimed the Spanish throne for his grandson Philip of Anjou, excluding English merchants from the Spanish colonial trade" (230). As a result, the colonial holdings of both France and England were once again at stake and North America entered the second of its French and Indian Wars.

Similar to Lancaster and Casco Bay years prior, Deerfield had little protection from French and Indian attacks and would be subjected to the same violence. As the Puritan minister and community leader at Deerfield when war again erupted, Williams lobbied for better defense of his wilderness congregation. "Despite Reverend Williams's pleas to the Massachusetts government to strengthen Deerfield," write Vaughn and Clark, "it remained largely undefended, and in late February 1704 it fell to an enemy force almost as large as the town's meager population" (167). Like Hannah Swarton, Williams was captured and completed the forced march into Canada where he lived among Jesuit priests and "praying Indians" for nearly three years.

Williams' account is similar to Swarton's in that it also reveals the complex relationship New England Protestants and "New France" Catholics maintained in North America during the years of conflict. As Vaughn and Clark write, "the colonists of both areas had much in common, especially an abhorrence of falling completely under Indian control, but as wartime enemies and religious rivals—in an age of intense loyalties and pervasive intolerance—Puritan and Canadian were worlds apart" (168). Williams depicts

this tense relationship in his contrasting opinions of the Natives, French laypersons, and Jesuit priests he encounters during his captivity, wherein he establishes a hierarchy of tolerance and acceptance.

The correspondences Williams includes in his narrative reveal both his tireless efforts to redeem himself and other captives as well as the process of negotiation that took place between enemies during the colonial wars. Williams' redemption was a hard-fought and well-publicized effort on behalf of the Puritans in Massachusetts. He was, after all, a clergyman himself, and well connected within the network of prominent church dignitaries. "In Deerfield, in Boston, and in the surrounding communities, the negotiations were followed with the keenest interest," writes John Demos, "Solid information was scarce; every scrap was cherished and, doubtless, shared with neighbors" (45). Williams was eventually redeemed 1706, but in yet another parallel to Swarton's experience, he was unable to deliver his daughter Eunice from captivity.

The captivity of a Puritan clergyman presented a significant theological problem in eighteenth-century New England. As authors Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier write, "...Puritans considered Indian captivity a divine chastisement for wrongdoing," and "...becoming a captive involved direct domination by diabolic spirits" (18). As a clergyman, Williams was surely aware of how captivity was perceived in the Puritan community. The impact of Rowlandson's narrative and the diligent efforts of Cotton Mather in shaping the religious message of such "humiliations" had codified the phenomenon of captivity. As Gary L. Ebersole notes, Williams knew this all too well:

Better than most commentators, Williams understood that the meaning of captivity is rhetorically and socially negotiated, not predetermined. Thus he realized that the manner in which the returning captives told their tales and how they comported themselves would help to determine the broader social meaning of their “affliction,” even as these would determine the spiritual consequences of their captivity. (73)

Williams, as both a male and a minister, had a good bit of control of how his own captivity was to be “rhetorically and socially negotiated.” Alden T. Vaughn and Edward W. Clark note that while Cotton Mather may have had some influence over the narrative, “Williams is justifiably credited with sole authorship. But that the two clergymen discussed the captivity-redemption experience and how best to turn it to God’s glory is also certain...” (168).

While God’s glory remains the intended message of *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*, it is of particular note that this glory does not require the severe affliction of Williams himself. To say that Williams does not relate the experience of any affliction at all in his narrative would be inaccurate, but given his role as an interpreter of captivity along with the established motif of hunger in the captivity genre, I find that the images of food and drink, are used more in Williams’ narrative to show a lack of personal affliction, and therefore present an unusual account of captivity. I would argue that Williams depicts his own account in this manner to avoid the difficult questions captivity presented—“the spiritual consequences,” and to divert the personal focus of affliction away from himself so as not to undermine his authority as a clergyman.

Williams establishes this rhetorical position in the very first line of the narrative. In contrast to earlier religious accounts, his “history” does not offer a personal confession, but rather pits “the anger of God” against “a professing people” (2). Here Williams also alludes to “days of fasting” echoing Cotton Mather’s criticism of the waning sincerity with which Puritan congregations practiced the ritual humiliation of hunger. “Fast is but a Form,” Mather writes in *Humiliations Follow’d With Deliverances*, “an Hungry and Empty Form, if we do not therein heartily Repent of our Miscarriages,” (20). With this stance, Williams establishes himself as a clergyman first, and a captive second, resisting the established pattern of affliction-followed-by-reconversion throughout his narrative. This is a clear departure from the narratives of Rowlandson and Swarton, both of whom readily conform to the role of captive and the process of recovation. To support this rhetoric, Williams employs the images of food and drink to further control the perception of his captivity.

The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion actually begins with the pattern of hunger first established in Rowlandson’s narrative. Following the attack and the immediate removal from Deerfield, Williams writes, “When we came to our lodging-place the first night, they dug away the snow and made some wigwams, cut down some of the small branches of spruce trees to lie down on, and gave the prisoners somewhat to eat, but we had but little appetite” (12). However, whereas the lack of appetite signals the beginnings of a brief but significant period of starvation in both Rowlandson’s and Swarton’s narratives, Williams’ hunger does not persist. Following the separation from his family, Williams continues his trek to Canada with his Native American “master”

who, according to the narrative, does not deprive Williams of food or offer him anything unpleasant to eat:

And here my master was very kind to me, would always give me the best he had to eat, and by the goodness of God, I never wanted a meal's meat during my captivity; though some of my children and neighbors were greatly wounded (as I may say) with the arrows of famine and pinching want; having for many days nothing but roots to live upon, and not much of them either. (22)

This claim is perhaps the most significant in Williams' effort to control the interpretation of his captivity. It presents two distinctly different captivity experiences wherein God's grace is distributed unevenly. In a literary form where images of food and drink have become the currency of God's grace, Williams portrays an ordeal where his "assurance" is never in question.

From an ethnographic perspective, Williams' lack of hunger can be explained by his participation in the hunt with his Native American master. Williams notes several scenarios along the three-hundred-mile trek into Canada, where he and his master "tarry" for days eating, preparing meat, or otherwise feasting:

My master returned on the evening of the Sabbath and told me he had killed five moose. The next day we removed to the place where he had killed them. We tarried for three days till we had roasted and dried the meat. (21)

We went a day's journey from the lake [Champlain] to a small company of Indians who were a hunting; they were, after their manner, kind to me, and gave me the best they had which was moose-flesh, groundnuts, and cranberries but not bread. (24)

We again began a march for Chamblee; we stayed at a branch of the lake, and feasted two or three days on geese we killed there. (24)

Williams' descriptions also offer a plausible explanation for the reports of native American gluttony and idleness Rowlandson and Swarton present in their narratives. These claims tend to bolster a prejudice that links alleged sloth, excess, and waste with impiety. The pattern of eating copious amounts and then traveling extreme distances eating very little, portrayed in Williams' narrative, provides an insight into native American food practices that, while counter to English norms, works to dispel the notion of mere godless sloth.

For Williams, however, these details are irrelevant at best and in the Puritan captivity narrative tradition, the Reverend makes it unmistakably clear that the "wonderful favours" of nourishment appear "by the goodness of God" and are not the gifts of compassion from his Indian captors. In a sermon delivered in Boston not long after his redemption from captivity, Williams preaches:

God hath made those whose characters have been, that they were such whose tender mercies were cruelties; such from whom one act of pity and compassion could scarce be expected, even such who have delighted in cruelty; to pity and compassionate such who were led into captivity by them. Made them bear on

their arms, and carry on their shoulders, our little ones, unable to travel. Feed their prisoners with the best of their provision: Yea, sometimes pinch themselves, as too their daily food, rather than their captives...Oh! let us adore the riches of the grace of God...(102)

Just as Puritans understood captivity to be the manifestation of God's wrath, the otherwise inexplicable turns of good fortune that befell captives and others experiencing calamity were manifestations of Divine intervention.

Williams' encounters with French laypersons yield similar "favours" as his journey into Canada marks the intersection of English, Native, and French cultures. Similar to Swarton's account, Williams' narrative portrays the French as very accommodating. He recalled that, "The French were very nice to me" (24). Of particular significance is a scene wherein Williams and his native captors receive food from a Frenchman during their journey. Here Williams writes:

When we came to St. Francois River, we found some difficulty by reason of the ice, and, entering into a Frenchman's house, he gave us a *loaf of bread and some fish* to carry away with us; but we passed down the river till night, and there seven of us supped on the fish, called bullhead or pout and did not eat it up, the fish was so very large (25). [italics added]

The association with "the miracle of the loaves and fishes"⁶ is not explicitly stated in the narrative, but Williams and his readers would not have overlooked the scriptural precedent. The references to the kindness of French laypersons in Williams' narrative function much as they do in Swarton's text; that is, they focus attention upon the spiritual

⁶ Matthew 14:13-21. New American Standard. 1990.

trial under the Catholic captors. While both Swarton's and Williams' narratives have an element of nationalistic propaganda, the distinction made between French laity and clergy reminds readers that at the center, these accounts are religious in intent.

Williams' portrayal of the French laity he encounters while in captivity also reveals the complexity of European and native interaction in colonial North America. Although enemies, the French and English often held a mutual disdain for the native populations of their respective colonies, many having been at one time either captives themselves or witnesses to Indian atrocities. Curiously, this prejudice manifests itself in Williams' narrative in interactions involving food. Just before the scene in the narrative where Williams is given the fish and bread, he receives a meal at the home of a Frenchwoman:

When we came down to the first inhabited house at Sorel, a Frenchwoman came to the riverside and desired us to go down into her house, and, when we were entered, she compassioned our state and told us that she had in the last war been a captive among Indians and therefore was not a little sensible of our difficulties. She gave the Indians something to eat in the chimney-corner and spread a cloth on the table for us with napkins, which gave such offense to the Indians that they hasted away and would not call in at the fort. But wherever we entered into houses, the French were very courteous. (25)

Further down the river, following the meal of fish and bread, Williams relates a similar encounter. "We went to a French officer's house," he writes, "who took us into a private room, out of the sight of the Indians, and treated us very courteously" (26). The effect of

scenes such as these in Williams' narrative is twofold. First, it shows how lines of allegiance between Europeans and Natives are conditional and, second, it draws a further distinction between the French laity and clergy. After all, it is among the "papists" where Williams is made to feel most uncomfortable.

Williams never portrays his captivity as a trial of the spirit analogous to Swarton's experience. He depicts his experience among his French Jesuit captors as more a series of Protestant and Catholic theological debates—what Puritan readers might have expected from a minister in such a situation. One such debate that harkens back to both Williams' and Cotton Mather's warning over fast rituals is of particular significance:

...[the priests] upbraided me that God did not approve of our religion in
that he disregarded our prayers and accepted theirs. For, said they, "We
hear you had days of fasting and prayer before the fleet came to Quebec;
God would not regard your prayers but heard ours, and almost in a
miraculous way preserved us when assaulted and refused to hear your
fastday prayers for your preservation but heard ours for your desolation
and success." (42)

While the tone of this argument might seem at first glance the opening salvo of a school-yard brawl, the implications would have been well-understood by serious Puritan readers. The causes of such calamities were directly linked to "professing people" half-heartedly engaging in the practices of their faith, such as fast day rituals. Here the concept of fasting regarding the motif of hunger in captivity narratives is strategically placed by Williams to underscore the opening caveat of his narrative.

The duality of “outward man” and “inward man” used by Swarton to describe captivity among the natives and French is never addressed in Williams’ narrative. The nearest comparison might be Williams’ reference to medical care, where he writes, “My change of diet after the difficulties of my journeys caused an alteration of my body; I was physicked, blooded, and very tenderly taken care of in my sickness” (33). This, however, comes toward the end of his captivity and does not preface a spiritual crisis. Williams, of course, understood this duality. Ebersole writes, “Physical captivity, which the Rev. John Williams called ‘outward Captivity,’ was to be understood as an external symptom of an internal spiritual malaise with a horrible prognosis—unless, that is, a swift and thoroughgoing program of repentance and reform was undertaken” (66). Williams confines any change, however, to the corporeal only, implying his captivity was one of outward captivity and one of little physical affliction at that.

Again, to claim that Williams did not suffer during his captivity would be both callous and reflect an inaccurate reading of his narrative. Certainly, his ordeal bears some affliction, most notably the loss of family members either through death or acculturation. The death of Williams’ wife proves to be an emotional low point in the narrative and, in fact, is difficult to read. Yet, even with death Williams is spared the affliction of spectacle. In her narrative, Rowlandson describes the slow and painful death of her daughter Sara, while Swarton recalls the slaying of her husband during the attack on Casco Bay. In contrast, Williams’ account is devoid of these grisly spectacles. Early in the narrative, at the start of his journey into Canada, Williams recalls the liquor induced murder of his ‘Negro man, the only dead person I either saw at the town or on the way’ (174). Williams is not a witness to the deaths he relates in his narrative,

including his own wife's, which could be interpreted as God's mercy. Of course, the inability to redeem his daughter, Eunice, despite many attempts, offers its own brand of enduring affliction⁷.

Although written in the manner of both Rowlandson's and Swarton's accounts, the lack of affliction related in Williams' narrative might, in fact, be a reaction to these two prior texts. Noting the subversive, paradoxical message both Rowlandson's and Swarton's narratives carried, Tara Fitzpatrick suggests that Williams' narrative was intended to reclaim the captivity narrative as an instrument of Puritan discourse:

The atomizing tendencies of the women's narratives had challenged the theological unity of the community; now [Williams'] narrative would recreate that unity on political and increasingly nationalistic grounds—and the promise of personal salvation in the wilderness, outside the hedge, would no longer be subversive but instead triumphal. (19)

The effect of Williams' narrative, interpreted in this manner, might counter the personalizing effect inherent in Rowlandson's and Swarton's accounts and relocate the focus of corrective affliction back to the community instead of the individual. While this is certainly a plausible interpretation, I still contend that Williams' contrasting portrayal of captivity is due simply to his position in the clergy and his desire to avoid the spiritual crisis captivity suggested.

That Reverend John Williams would write a narrative account of his captivity was a doubt few in New England had when he was finally redeemed in 1706. The letter he had sent to Cotton Mather while still captive, which Mather promptly published to great

⁷ For a comprehensive account of the Williams family captivity, See Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive*.

reception⁸, had shown that his story had a waiting audience. He was, of course, expected to write and publish a captivity narrative to relate his own account of God's mercies as Rowlandson, Swarton, and many others had done before him. What makes his narrative distinct among a genre of affliction-themed accounts is his conspicuous lack of affliction, namely, of hunger. While circumstances may have been to his advantage throughout his captivity, Williams' dual role of clergyman and captive presents a unique narrative that challenges the established image of captivity.

⁸ The letter was published along with poems and other accounts of Deerfield's redeemed in Mather's *Good Fetch'd Out of Evil*. See Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive*, 49.

Conclusion

Throughout the three captivity narratives discussed in this thesis, we have seen the role of hunger established, affirmed, and rebuffed. With the foundational text of Mary Rowlandson, the theme of corrective affliction is conveyed by the hunger she endures as a captive. The images of food and drink with which she describes the various stages of her hunger give structure and meaning to her experience and provide the genre of Puritan captivity literature with its most significant motif. Hannah Swarton's narrative recalls the importance of hunger and affirms the impact of Rowlandson's rhetorical use of hunger. The dual narrative of physical and spiritual trials, central to Rowlandson's narrative, is divided in Swarton's text to account for her native and French captors. However, hunger remains at the center of her conversion experience. Reverend John Williams, undoubtedly well-informed of the image hunger portrayed in Puritan captivity narrative, attempts to subvert the image of hunger in his own narrative. He does so in order to avoid the issue of reconversion, knowing that for a minister to claim he was deserving of God's affliction would greatly undermine his authority. This rhetorical strategy, however, ultimately reaffirms the significance of hunger as the central metaphor for affliction.

In looking at these texts, we have also determined how certain elements of Puritan discourse regarding hunger have influenced the writing of captivity narratives. I point to three plausible contexts wherein hunger is prefigured in the Puritan experience: biblical, clerical, and environmental. Understanding how these factors shape the language and the

religious import of these texts reveals how captivity narratives were an integral part of Puritan culture in America.

The theme of affliction in Puritan captivity narratives was one originally intended to remind readers, as Rowlandson states, of the sovereignty, as well as the goodness of God. These texts were essentially records of Divine providence, according to the authors, and were written as both warnings and glorifications of God's power. The way in which these accounts are told has been the focus of this thesis, specifically the rhetorical use of hunger in defining affliction. As we have seen, hunger proves to be the most significant affliction in Puritan captivity narratives, providing a metaphor for the physical and spiritual transformation of captivity. When we look at the recurring images of food and drink in Puritan captivity narratives, we can interpret their meaning as the lesson of hunger.

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