

BILLY J. STRATTON, *Buried in Shades of Night: Contested Voices, Indian Captivity, and the Legacy of King Philip's War* (Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2013) 149 pp.

During the last forty years, the *Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (the much abbreviated title by which *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* [1682] is now commonly known) has become an essential text, perhaps the essential text, of American Puritan literature. In anthologies and the syllabi derived from them, it is prominently featured, often to the minimizing, or even displacement, of once canonical historical works such as Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation* and Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*. It has repeatedly been interpreted as the ur-text of the captivity narrative, an important American sub-genre that was to include fugitive slave narratives as well as Indian captivities. Given Rowlandson's repeated references to Indians as 'merciless enemies' and 'bloody heathen,' her *Narrative* suits the postcolonial critic's central concern for the contrasts between 'savage' and 'civilized,' between white colonizers and native peoples, between 'we western Christians' and the Lacanian 'Other.' Moreover, Rowlandson's *Narrative* was written by a woman fully aware of her gender and her sexual vulnerability, thus giving students a respite from the line of patriarchal Puritan writers from John Winthrop through Edward Taylor to Jonathan Edwards. As a form of spiritual autobiography, Rowlandson's *Narrative* compels its readers to assess the applicability of biblical passages to a Puritan's daily life. Whether Increase Mather had a direct hand in the composition and publication of the 1682 text raises a fascinating instance of the importance of textual research. And, above all, Mrs. Rowlandson's *Narrative* is short, capable of being read carefully in ninety minutes. In sum, Rowlandson's *Narrative* has everything to recommend it to recent scholarly-critical fashion.

Stratton's book is less a comprehensive, detailed study of Rowlandson's text than an investigation of the historical and literary circumstances of its origin, publication, and subsequent cultural and scholarly history. As such, Stratton makes important contributions to an already populated field. Stratton demonstrates that *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* is not in fact the first captivity narrative. Citing Nabil Matar, Stratton shows that

there were "at least ten accounts of English captivity in the Muslim dominions published between 1527 and 1625 in England alone" (30). These captivity narratives, mostly about Barbary pirates, might have been known to Rowlandson or to Increase Mather; they contain conventions of situation and characterization to be found in Rowlandson's *Narrative* and in subsequent captivities. Secondly, Stratton carefully reconstructs the little that is known about the origin and printing of *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, then demonstrates undeniable similarities of syntax and diction between Rowlandson's and Increase Mather's accounts of the Indian attack on Lancaster with which Rowlandson's *Narrative* so memorably begins. Stratton forcefully argues that the "breadth and integration" of the *Narrative*'s biblical citations, together with "their skilled application [...] suggests his [Increase Mather's] presence not only as the outside ministerial hand in question, but as the primary author of the narrative itself" (119). These arguments are plausible, even persuasive, precisely because they are tempered with reminders of all we still do not know, and cannot ever prove, about literary influence in the seventeenth century.

Scholarly temperance and impartiality are not the qualities, however, that describe Stratton's attitudes toward the purpose, values, and lasting influence of Rowlandson's *Narrative*. Stratton is determined to read Rowlandson's book as evidence of what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have termed "deterritorialization" (45)—the rhetorical process by which a literate people imaginatively displaces and then dispossesses a native population of their land. Even though Mrs. Rowlandson's text never directly considers the vexed issue of English versus Indian land ownership, to Stratton 'deterritorialization' is her book's underlying purpose. Its title concern for the "Sovereignty and Goodness of God," together with the Protestant notion of life as a pilgrim's journey through afflictions toward restoration and salvation, are therefore treated as negligible considerations compared to the wrongs suffered by Native Americans at the hands of Puritan settlers, Puritan soldiers, and Puritan writers. John Winthrop's and John Cotton's familiar argument that untilled, unsettled land is a "Vacuum Domicilium" awaiting possession of God's People is three times condemned as a mere "alibi" by which the Puritans rationalized a land grab (53; 63; 137).

Stratton will give no consideration to the possibility that leaders of the Great Migration could hardly have believed otherwise, despite the gadfly protests of Roger Williams, about whom Stratton is surprisingly silent.

In the cumulative rhetoric of Stratton's book, Puritans increasingly become oppressors, Native Americans increasingly become victims, and there is little ground to occupy between them. Accordingly, the same split occurs in the degree of authority Stratton is willing to grant scholarly predecessors. Homi K. Bhabha, Jacques Derrida, Francis Jennings, Edward Said, Hayden White, and Howard Zinn are cited as authorities who correctly understood the truths of hidden historical fact and the deviousness of historical narrative. Twentieth-century scholars who granted differing degrees of credence to Rowlandson's point of view—Michelle Burnham, Jill Lepore, Perry Miller, Teresa Toulouse, Alden Vaughan—are cited as representatives of a hegemonic academy unknowingly perpetuating falsities in order to maintain the neo-Puritan point of view. Such scholars, Stratton assumes, have little or nothing of importance to tell us. Stratton condemns the binary thinking of the Puritan mentality, but his own rhetoric does not escape such dualism; he merely inverts it.

*Buried in Shades of Night*—Stratton's title is from William Apess's now well-known *Eulogy* of 1836—is something of an in-house production. Stratton wrote his dissertation, of which this book is a revision, under the guidance of Frances Washburn in the American Indian

Studies Program at the University of Arizona. Stratton's book is published by the University of Arizona Press. Frances Washburn wrote the foreword to Stratton's book in which Washburn claims, misleadingly, that "very little attention has been given to the accumulation of injustices perpetrated by the Puritans against the Indian tribes of the region, injustices that led Metacomet (known as King Philip to the Puritans) to war against the Puritan colonists and also led to Rowlandson's captivity" (xi). "Here at last," Washburn announces, "is a scholar who writes back" (xiii). Sure enough, Stratton does indeed write back, concluding "the fact that [Mrs. Rowlandson's] narrative is told through the perspective of a minister's wife, or that it contains a narrative of repentance and redemption, does not invalidate its simultaneous status as a war-machine" (94). Stratton, however, is hardly the first voice of vehement protest. In chronological order, Hannah Adams, Washington Irving, Lydia Maria Child, James Fenimore Cooper, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, William Carlos Williams, Richard Slotkin, Michael Rogin, Alden Vaughan, Michelle Burnham, Jill Lepore, and others had already written back to reveal "the accumulation of injustices perpetrated by the Puritans." In the throes of the scholarly need to gain notice by alleging something purportedly new, it is unwise, even unprofessional, to ignore the existence and worth of a longstanding counter-tradition.

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