Fruitful in the Land of My Affliction:

Narratives of Captivity and Female Self-Fashioning, 1666-1824

by

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"For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

–Genesis 41: 52

Abstract

The importance of the trope of captivity to the development of the female self comes from the absolute cultural immersion that necessarily attends the captive situation. In non-fictional accounts such as Mary Rowlandson's and Mary Jemison's it forces the total reconstruction of a subjectivity based on relationship to, rather than difference from, and the resulting flexibility in the subject allows for and at times forces actions that under normal circumstances would be abominations. These fact-based narratives also allow a freedom of movement otherwise inaccessible to women, which in fictional captivities such as Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*, Françoise de Graffigny's *Lettres d'une péruvienne*, and Sarah Fielding's *Ophelia*, can translate into an ability on the part of the writer to construct not only the subjectivity of the speaker, but the very cultural situation (or what Charles Taylor refers to as cultural "landmarks") upon which the subjectivity is based. This allows the construction of subject positions with an autonomy and flexibility previously made impossible by the restrictions of the society in which the authors wrote. The possibilities thus enabled by the new cultural milieu empower authors–particularly female authors–to build and rebuild themselves (and their characters) as autonomous speaking subjects.

Rowlandson is forced into the unstable captive situation and adapts to it; Cavendish, de Graffigny and Fielding all create it for themselves, in order to use the subversive potential it creates. Jemison, on the other hand, seems to embrace it, initially out of necessity, but in the end out of a desire to stay in the Indian culture because its recognition of identity as cultural rather than racial is, in the end, comfortable and natural for her.

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CONTENTS

Introduction: Gender and Genre 1

Mary Rowlandson's Sacred Abominations 17

I. Rowlandson's Cultural Landscape 21

II. Captivity Narratives and Freedom of Speech 24

III. Integration and the Sanctity of Abominations 38

IV. Coming Home 57

Margaret Cavendish: The Self Begotten 65

I. The Realm of "Phantasie" and the Empress's New Clothes 66

II. Satanic Solipsism and the *Phantastike* imagination 80

III. Self-sufficient Female Atoms and Cavendish's Icastic Imagination 91

Translated Letters, Liminal Spaces, and Zilia's Imaginary Lover 105

I. Disorientation, Decentralization, and the Epistolary Structure 108

II. Familiar Sights, Markers of Meaning 118

III. Going Public 129

IV. Living in Translation 134

Sarah Fielding's *Ophelia*: Marriage, Female Separatism, and the Problem with Paradise 147

I. Illusion and the Epistolary Format 150

II. Discomfort, Desire, and the Trouble with Paradise 155

III. "She lost all Liberty of Thought" 175

Mary Jemison's Leather Stockings: Cultural Identity and the Middle Ground 188

I. Cultural Identity and the Middle Ground 193

II. Resisting Re-Interpretation 206

III. Critical Legacies 215

Works Cited 226

Vita 244

Introduction: Gender and Genre

To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand.
—Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*

In the introduction to *The Indian Captivity Narrative: A Woman's View* (1990), Frances Kestler remarks: "that this simple type of writing, universally exciting and credible, formed a decisive part of the beginning of our American literature, never to be duplicated in any other country, is a fact. That it was initiated by a woman and further developed by other women is another fact" (Kestler xxxv). But Kestler's assertion of these "facts" is not strictly accurate. Although historical circumstances certainly led to the genre's unique development in American Literature, stories of captivity may be traced back into folklore, myth, and fairytale.[1] In America, men were captured as well as women, and wrote detailed accounts of their experiences; the most famously misrepresented of these, thanks to the Disney corporation, is Captain John Smith's encounter with Pocahontas. But although Kestler's statements are not entirely accurate, they do gesture toward a fascinating link between gender and the captivity narrative genre. As the texts this study focuses on demonstrate, the topos of captivity, which may appear simply historical in its American "documentary" variation, draws attention to a transhistorical constant in the circumstances of production of female selfhood. The women whose texts

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[1] The culturally assumed link between women and passivity in both written and oral western cultural traditions adds weight to the cultural perception of women as the quintessential captives. Fairy tale princesses often find themselves waiting in docile hope of rescue by swashbuckling heroes. In spite of such heroines as Spenser's Britomart in *The Faerie Queene*, who play active and dramatic roles in the rescue of (often male) captives, it is the role of captive rather than rescuer which remains most strongly associated with women.

appear in this study come from dramatically varied personal and cultural circumstances. but they are linked through the genre they use to raise their individual voices. Whether these authors launch a conscious social critique using the captivity narrative as a vehicle, or simply find a place for their voices to be heard in the writing of a "true" account, in each case the use of the captivity narrative says something about the condition of the woman writer and her sense of self in relation to the world.

In its non-fictional incarnations, the captivity narrative is identifiable by an almost formulaic series of events. Richard VanDerBeets, in discussing American Indian captivity narratives, describes this pattern as "Separation (isolation from one's culture and symbolic death), Transformation (a series of excruciating ordeals in passing from ignorance to knowledge and maturity, accompanied by ritualized adoption into a new culture), and Return (symbolic rebirth with a sense of moral and spiritual gain)" (VanDerBeets x). That captivity narratives remain both formulaic and feminized in their fictional variations, even in modern western culture, is evidenced by the large number of mass-market paperback romance novels that take captivity as their theme. Of these, "Indian Captivity" or "Native American" plot lines are a standard and established subgenre popular enough to give rise. in the 1980s, to an entire series of "Indian Captivity" novels (called, rather incredibly, "the Savage Series") published by Zebra books (McCafferty 45). The popularity of this theme comes, in the words of romance author Colleen Faulkner, from the fact that the story represents "the ultimate fantasy. Someone you think is a danger can give you a better life than the one you had" (qtd. in Ryan, n. pag.).

Although in the world of the pulp romance novel the captive heroine's "better life"

is largely due to a highly romanticized view both of Native American culture and of captivity itself, the essential paradox at the root of my study is that captivity narratives can function as *escape* literature, and offer a kind of freedom to their authors–a freedom that involves an enabled sense of identity development through freedom of speech. Even in the earliest examples of the genre's "documentary" or non-fictional form this tendency is visible, and as Laurel Ulrich remarks, the captive state ironically offered a kind of liberty to the women who experienced it:

> paradoxically, perhaps, the fact of capture might have meant an expansion. For those actually taken, new worlds both of terror and of possibility were opened. The captive described in the ministerial literature was invariably an innocent Christian seized by rude savages and subjected to capricious taunts and torments mitigated only by divine intervention. Captivity thus became a ritualistic journey of salvation, a passage through suffering and despair toward saving faith. In reality, captivity was sometimes a journey toward a new home, a new occupation, new friends and family, or at the very least toward earthly experiences little imagined in the farms and villages left behind. (Ulrich 202)

Even in its non-fact-based novelistic incarnations, the captivity narrative mirrors the restrictions inhibiting women in their societies, but at the same time presents the possibility of transcending these limitations–at least in print.

The complete change in the physical geography surrounding the captive, as Ulrich's explanation suggests, mirrors a similar and equally cataclysmic change in her cultural geography. As Wendy Martin comments,

> captivity and travel narratives make it quite clear that travel, whether voluntary or forced, presents a radical challenge to the notion of a fixed stable self. When coerced, as in the case of Mary Rowlandson, the traveler's challenge is to maintain a stable identity and to have consistent responses even in the face of extraordinary danger. When the journey is voluntary . . . the challenge is to more fully integrate new experiences and

> cultures. (Martin viii)

The enormity of the impact of this change in circumstances and its relationship to the development of subjectivity is better understood when examined through the lens of Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self*, from which the epigraph to this introduction is drawn.

Answering the question, "Who am I?", Taylor suggests, cannot necessarily be done by simply "giving name and genealogy." Instead, he argues,

> [w]hat does answer this question for us is an understanding of what is of crucial importance to us. To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand. (Taylor 27)

What this "brings to light," he continues, is "the essential link between identity and a kind of orientation. To know who you are is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary. . . . The disorientation and uncertainty about where one stands as a person seems to spill over into a loss of grip on one's stance in physical space" (Taylor 28). This metaphor of subjectivity as reliant on an almost geographical orientation permeates both the factual and the fictive captivity narratives in this study.

Taylor links the need for an almost physical orientation in a cultural space to the development of the subject as speaker in a way that seems quite natural: "[m]y self-definition is understood as an answer to the question Who I am. And this question finds its

original sense in the interchange of speakers. I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to the ones I love, and also crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out" (Taylor 35). The confluence of geographical and cultural orientations Taylor describes here resonates with Ulrich's description of the circumstances of captivity, but Taylor's work tends to view the location of the resulting "self" as final and fixed, and suggests that moral disorientation leads to physical destabilization. The experiences of the women this study focuses on appear to be somewhat at variance with this. The reorientation of the subject in both cultural and physical space, combined with the use of metaphorical "landmarks" and "horizons" to establish position, suggests that the location of the subject (and thus the place from which speech issues) gains flexibility in the confines of captivity. Even some of the features which orient the self (such as the cultural horizon) are completely destabilized, but the resulting subjectivities produced in these texts assert themselves with confidence. My purpose in this study is to examine how this flexibility enables and empowers autonomous subjectivity and speech in women who wrote about their experiences in captivity, and to illustrate how women authors use the possibilities inherent in the captivity narrative as a trope to enable and empower their own ability to speak.

What a reading of Ulrich and Taylor together suggests, then, is that the importance of the captivity narrative genre to the development of a female public voice comes from the mobility attendant upon and the flexibility necessary to survival in the absolute cultural

immersion of the captive state. In documentary/non-fictional accounts, the actual events of the captivity introduce the possibility–even the imperative–of movement beyond the boundaries of the settlement which orients those within it both physically and culturally by keeping them strictly segregated from the "wilderness." The totally foreign cultural backdrop against which the remainder of the tale is written provides an obvious focus for the protagonist's differentiation from the culture of her captors, but ironically more often than not serves to quietly illuminate cultural similarities rather than differences despite the best efforts of the author or transcriber. In the end, these documentary texts chart the development of a subjectivity forced into a flexibility resulting from the need to live in an utterly foreign yet strangely familiar environment. Part of the disruptive cultural similarity tacitly acknowledged in these captivity stories comes from attempts to force the strange environment to take on meaning in cultural terms familiar to the captive herself.

Although the fictional captivity narratives are often obviously fantasies, the line between reality and fiction in them becomes blurred by allegory, as the social concerns underwriting many of the narratives speak to the confining nature of culturally enforced gender roles. Although sexual titillation exists in some of the genre's prototypes, it is not nearly as dominant in them as it becomes in the more modern pulp fiction versions. More central to these early narratives is the social critique they launch, which places them in a tradition somewhat apart from the so-called "penny-dreadfuls." Even more significant are the differences that separate fictional captivity narratives from their documentary counterparts. The fact-based narratives illuminate the process of subject development as captive women cope with situations beyond their control; in a fictional setting authors

retain absolute control of the situation, and are able to dictate exactly where their captive heroines are taken. This translation to a fictional context reconfigures the enforced flexibility arising from the "real" or physical captive state into the ability to construct the circumstances that shape the subject in her new conformation. This results in the trope of captivity giving rise to enormous possibilities of control over the shaping (or fashioning) of the self, and the illusion of freedom coming, paradoxically, from bondage.

The jump from documentary accounts of actual captivities in America to English and European fictional texts that use captivity as a trope (and make no direct reference to either America or Indians) is not as unlikely as is might at first appear. In their 1992 article "The American Origins of the English Novel" Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse discuss the ways in which Mary Rowlandson's immensely popular narrative allowed "Englishness . . . to be embodied in a nonaristocratic female" and "the female in question [to become] a virtually inexhaustible source of English prose" (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 391). They use the precedent of Rowlandson's text to discuss Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* which, along with *Clarissa*, must be considered among the most famous accounts of captive women in English literature. Michelle Burnham reiterates this comparison in 1996, noting that "[p]opular texts such as colonial 'American' captivity narratives and 'English' sentimental novels . . . regularly crossed" back and forth over the Atlantic Ocean (Burnham 50). However, there is a crucial difference between Pamela's methods of constructing and maintaining her subjectivity and those of the heroines in the texts this study will examine.

When Pamela is threatened with "assimilation" by rape into the immoral culture of

her aristocratic captor, her response is the ultimate passivity: she faints;. Richardson's text sustains the twin characteristics of the sentimental heroine as passive and as identified primarily by her sexuality. Although the rise of the sentimental heroine and what David Haberly refers to as the "frankly commercial" purpose of many sensational "documentary" captivity narratives, particularly between 1750-1850, certainly underscore precisely the same kinds of stereotypes,[2] two of the four most popular captivity narratives--which are also, Haberly notes, "listed among the great best sellers of American publishing by Frank Luther Mall"--are those of Mary Rowlandson and Mary Jemison, neither of which bear any resemblance to tales of the tender and compliant sentimental heroine. Nor is the active establishment of identity within the captive setting limited to non-fictional accounts; fictional /novelistic texts written by women use the trope of captivity both to express in allegorical terms the restrictions of gender, and to transcend those same limitations.

An examination of the earlier of these two American bestsellers, Rowlandson's *Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, forms the first chapter of this study. Although Rowlandson's narrative is not the earliest text to be published out of the five I will investigate,[3] in many ways it set the standard for and increased the popularity of the genre.

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[2] Haberly refers to the feared possibility that "a white woman captured by Indians might be defeminized; that is, that her suffering and her separation from civilization might lead her into patterns of behaviour suitable only for males," although he also notes that "[t]his danger had not greatly preoccupied the Puritans, who applauded Hannah Dustan's massacre of her captors" (Haberly 434).

[3] Margaret Cavendish's *Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* predates Rowlandson's narrative by twelve years, but it certainly seems to have been influenced by new world narratives and borrows the idea of the new world as a land of opportunity.

The acceptance it received as a text written and published by a woman was highly unusual, given the hierarchical and strictly governed social structure of Puritan New England. This success can be attributed in large part to the text's veneer of compliance with the project of the church fathers. Christopher Castiglia notes that "because it offered a model for forming identity through opposition," Puritan narratives such as Rowlandson's "valorized resistance to acculturation" (23). Thus by being taken outside of the boundaries of the community while still carrying the community's boundaries with her, and by writing about her experience, Rowlandson is theoretically able to reinforce the difference between Puritans and "savages," and to thus emphasize and preserve the boundaries of the community against the wilderness, opposed to whose menacing presence the Puritans identified themselves.

However, this same mobility that apparently insists on Rowlandson's affirmation of Puritan cultural boundaries also allows her greater freedom to step outside of her culture's restrictive influence. At the same time as she affirms her attachment to the Puritan community she has left behind by using biblical quotations to validate and explain her experience typologically, she also uses biblical references to describe her captors. Nor are these the expected references to Egypt, Babylon, or even the desert wasteland; rather, Rowlandson (perhaps inadvertently) numbers her captors among the blessed, likening them at one point to Jehu, the Israelite king who killed the infamous Jezebel.

Rowlandson's ability to slip between identities gives her subjectivity a flexibility that simultaneously facilitates the culturally transgressive behaviours necessary to her survival and sanctifies these same practices. Even as the patriarchs of the church allow her

to speak and endorse her typological references to the Old Testament, they also allow her to usurp even their own authority, for when she speaks, she speaks "as" David, or Job, or even Isaiah. This slippage between identities, and the ability to hold more than one subject position at a time, as well as the attending ability to orient and reorient the self in a relative rather than a fixed position, re-emerges in various forms in the fictional texts which are the focus of chapters two through four.

The first of these chapters concerns itself with Margaret Cavendish's *A Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World.* Unlike Rowlandson, Cavendish never experienced the physical hardships that accompany actual captivity (although she and her husband lived in exile and on credit for the duration of the interregnum). Nevertheless, Cavendish did feel herself a captive of the role her gender relegated her to at birth. More than anything, Cavendish wanted to be taken seriously as a scholar and writer. Her fondest hope was that her writings would outlive her; her darkest fear was of eternal obscurity.

Although Cavendish's struggle, unlike Rowlandson's, was not a physical struggle for survival, it was nonetheless real; philosophical discourse was the nearly exclusive domain of men, and the text of Cavendish's *Blazing World* shows a unique response to this exclusivity. Denied access to the kind of public discourse she craved, Cavendish creates a utopian world and populates it with figures who are all quite easily identified as Cavendish herself–some of them even by name. Thus she sets up a scenario wherein she is finally able to enter the discourse of natural philosophy–but with herself. As the *Blazing World* opens, a "Young Lady" of gentle breeding is abducted from the shores of her

homeland by a merchant and taken aboard his ship. The ship sails through the poles of the "lady's" world to an adjoining world (the Blazing World) where the Lady captivates the Emperor, who promptly makes her his Empress. Her interest in and opinions on natural philosophy, made clear through her extensive discussions with the inhabitants of the Blazing World, link the Empress to Cavendish the author (or in this case narrative persona). And a short time later the author/narrator and Empress are joined by the soul of "Margaret Cavendish," whom the Empress commandeers to be her scribe. The result of this amazing and somewhat confusing conglomeration is a tripartite subject which is able to be in dialogue–quite literally–with itself.

Although this seems to solve the problem of Cavendish's exclusion from public discourse, it does so at a cost, for the immediate danger in such a self-referential and closed system of "discourse" is solipsism. In fact, the very utopian setting Cavendish uses forces the reader to consider whether the world she proposes grows only out of her own self absorbed fantasy, or whether its relevance might extend to a wider audience. Certainly Cavendish's "antic" dress and behaviour, along with her publically stated will to fame, precipitated her celebrity as "Mad Madge of Newcastle." Although this perception of her made it easier for her writing to be dismissed as irrelevant, the general attitude toward women who sought a voice in public discourse also casts her eccentric persona in the role of a shield, deflecting the kinds of censure often levelled at women such as Lady Mary Wroth who were judged to take themselves and their writing too seriously, thus overstepping the bounds of their gender. The result of these strategic textual machinations is that Cavendish's narrative hides the seriousness of her philosophical proposals within a

guise of ungoverned fancy. In tandem with the multiple subjectivity she creates in order to manufacture a dialogic environment, this leads to a similar flexible, mobile subjectivity to the one Rowlandson develops in her captive state.

While Cavendish's unique approach to using the captivity narrative trope involves creating a utopian environment, the more customary and accurate approach (as Rowlandson's narrative amply demonstrates) is to use the captivity narrative to describe an intensely *dystopic* situation. This is exactly what Françoise de Graffigny does in her epistolary novel *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*. In a highly imaginative and totally anachronistic set of events, Graffigny has her heroine, the Peruvian princess Zilia, captured by the Spanish at the sack of Cusco in 1532 and placed in a boat headed toward Spain. The Spanish boat is intercepted, however, and Zilia is "rescued" (or recaptured) by a French crew under a man named Déterville, who brings her to a very eighteenth-century France. In this fascinating reversal of the usual cultural roles, it is the "Indian" who is captured by the Europeans, and through Zilia's eyes the European culture looks strange indeed.

Graffigny's text shows the metaphorical relationship Charles Taylor describes between cultural and geographical orientation directly. Zilia's traumatic relocation is marked over and over by her efforts to orient herself in physical space, and more subtly by her need for "cultural landmarks," the first of which is her fiancé Aza (who is also, as "Capa-Inca," emblematic of her culture). Zilia's attachment to Aza initially serves to help her orient her identity and identify the place from which she speaks.

This speaking position is intimately linked to her identity as Peruvian, and her

determination to keep this cultural association as part of her identity while in captivity leads to her ability to resist complete cultural assimilation. Although continuing to live in France and, after a time, needing to learn the French language both result in some degree of cultural integration, Zilia's continued references to Peru (initially in the person of Aza) keep her from becoming wholly French. As these references to her culture of origin, although they appear to take Aza specifically as their subject, become more and more obviously flexible and abstract, the role of cultural landmarks becomes clearer. The significance of Aza as a specific individual decreases noticeably during the course of the narrative, and what becomes more obviously important is his symbolic status. Since symbols and landmarks are ultimately arbitrary and relative, the space Aza fills can be (and is) filled with other cultural markers that allow Zilia to identify herself with the Peruvian culture (rather than only with the man who is/was its leader) while also taking part in the French. Thus the captivity which so confines Zilia also adds to the flexibility of her subjectivity, a flexibility not unlike Cavendish's and Rowlandson's.

Zilia's consequent ability to be in French culture but not of it enables both her and her author to speak publicly. As a foreigner Zilia can see with innocent eyes, and her naive interpretations of her surroundings result in a scathing critique of French culture. For Zilia herself, it is her status as an outlander in France which simultaneously gives her the linguistic tools to make herself heard and allows her to critique the culture she so uncomfortably inhabits. For Graffigny, Zilia's liminal position between cultures enables the allegorical representation of women in western European society. Although she seems to agree with Cavendish that women's gender roles are confining, Graffigny's critique is far

broader than Cavendish's specific objection to the exclusivity of the discourse of natural philosophy. Rather, Graffigny focuses more generally on the relative powerlessness with which women lived in what was essentially a man's world.

Like Graffigny's heroine, Sarah Fielding's Ophelia is captured from an isolated and insulated existence and taken to the dangerous world of Western civilization's urban culture. However, Fielding's novel effectively critiques the kind of cultural isolationism apparently promoted by Zilia's removal of herself to the country, out of reach of her captor's culture. In a sense, Fielding's *Ophelia* picks up where Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* leaves off. Through a series of disastrous events, Ophelia ends up living in absolute seclusion in the countryside (in her case, in the wilds of Wales) with only her aunt for human company. However, the treatment the novel gives this situation suggests that this apparent utopia is as repressive as any other physical captivity.

In fact, Ophelia's absolute dependence on her aunt stifles her reason by eliminating the need for her to exercise it. At the same time, the absolute satiation Ophelia experiences exposes the impossibility of establishing a position from which to speak because absolute satiation presupposes a lack of desire, and thus the lack of a reason for speech. But desire itself, however necessary it is in the production of speech, comes at a cost. The discomfort it causes (in contrast to the comfort of absolute gratification) pushes Ophelia almost beyond the limits of her endurance until death seems almost preferable.

Thus what this text explores is this dance between desire and death, played out in Ophelia's position trapped between life in the secluded and entirely self-sufficient and thus desireless position in Wales and life in the dangerous, amoral, uncomfortable but desire-

filled and pleasure-promising town. Although the fact that Ophelia chooses marriage at the end of the novel over life with her aunt in Wales suggests a strong tendency toward social conservatism, it is possible to read a bitter and ironic subtext into her acceptance of her captor Dorchester's marriage proposal that indicts marriage as well as separatism and suggests how limited and limiting the social roles for women are.

The final chapter of this study returns to the American continent and to event-based ("non-fictional") captivity narratives. Mary Jemison's narrative is unique because although it reads as a first person account of her experiences, she herself was illiterate and thus dictated it (in what seems like a strange echo of the actions of Cavendish's Empress) to (and at the request of) James Seaver. Although by the time Jemison dictated her story she was in her eighties, and after over sixty-five years of "captivity" considered the Seneca tribe she had married into twice her family, the title page to Seaver's version of the narrative clearly bills it as a captivity story. This contrast between Seaver's perception of Jemison and her perception of herself highlights a certain tension between Jemison's account of her story and Seaver's attempts to reconfigure it to fit his ideology–an ideology that could not cope with the notion of a white woman being comfortable in an Indian world. In some ways this culture clash acknowledges and even illustrates the kinds of barriers women needed to overcome in order to write. In a sense, Jemison's text is a captive of Seaver's ideological spin-doctoring more than her body and spirit are captive to the Seneca. What is extraordinary–and intensely optimistic–is that Jemison's voice comes through clearly in this narrative in ways that Seaver's bias cannot entirely stifle.

It is not the purpose of this study to suggest that captivity narratives were the

exclusive domain of women writers. Nor is it my intention to suggest that all women everywhere experienced captivity. However, the fact that the trope of captivity is used by and largely identified with women not only in documentary accounts but also in fictional narratives, and the fact that this trope is used by women from such a large range of socioeconomic, political, and religious backgrounds, suggests that the trope of captivity manages to capture a transhistorical constant in the constrictiveness of the social positions in which women have often found themselves as a direct result of their gender. The limitations of the captivity story in turn allow women to think through the possibilities for liberation, and to develop a sense of their own value independent of the esteem in which their societies hold them–or the roles their societies hold them to.

Stephen Greenblatt's original use of the term "self-fashioning" has become somewhat ironic by the time he reaches the end of *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. "Whenever I focused sharply upon a moment of apparently autonomous self-fashioning," he says, "I found not an epiphany of identity freely chosen but a cultural artifact. If there remained traces of free choice, the choice was among possibilities whose range was strictly delineated by the social and ideological system in force" (Greenblatt 256). In the texts which form the basis for this study, the "delineations of the social and ideological system in force" are sometimes even physically present. But what emerges here is the struggle for individuality, even within cultural–and in some cases physical–limitations. These texts do not reveal inert cultural artifacts, but rather they bear witness to individual desire and the determination of these women to articulate their selfhood.

Mary Rowlandson's Sacred Abominations

An experienced event is finite—at any rate, confined to one sphere of experience; a remembered event is infinite, because it is only a key to everything that happened before and after it.
–Walter Benjamin, "The Image of Proust"

"I am in *England* everywhere" –Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*

Perhaps the most astonishing moment for Mary Rowlandson during her 3 month captivity with the Nipmuk, Wampanoag, and Narragansett Indians comes during the "Sixteenth Remove," when she fails to distinguish an approaching group of Indians, who happen to be dressed in the clothes of dead English settlers, from actual English settlers:

> In that time came a company of *Indians* to us, nearly thirty, all on Horse back. My heart skipt within me, thinking they had been *English-men* at the first sight of them; for they were dressed in *English* Apparel, with Hats, white Neckcloths, and Sashes about their waists, and Ribbons upon their shoulders; but, when they came near, there was a vast difference between the lovely Faces of Christians, and the foul looks of those *Heathens*; which much damped my spirit again. (51-52)

Rowlandson's erroneous identification of the Indians as English affects her in a way perhaps best described by a comment from Edmund Burke's treatise on the Sublime and the Beautiful: "When two distinct objects are unlike to each other, it is only what we expect . . . therefore they make no impression on the imagination: but when two distinct objects have a resemblance, we are struck, we attend to them . . ." (1: 1757). Burke ends this passage by adding "and we are pleased," but the scene unfolding before Rowlandson "strikes" her with something more akin to a physical blow. In her initial misrecognition of the figures in front of her for figures with whom she identifies intimately. Rowlandson creates a situation wherein she can no longer claim absolute or even distinctive difference;

her inability to distinguish herself fully gives the image of an Indian dressed as an English settler its shock value.[4] The real horror may come from the fact that this brief encounter awakens within Rowlandson the realization of how close she is to "going native." In many respects she has already gone.

The attractiveness of this small scene for critics may come from the fact that it seems to invite an "obvious" reading: Rowlandson, once she discovers her perceptual error, enumerates and emphasizes the differences which distinguish her from the Indians as clearly as she can in an attempt to preserve her singularity and integrity as a subject. But a reading which overemphasizes her attempts to exclude outside influences obscures much of the richness and flexibility with which her own subjectivity functions. It also clouds the question of how, after participating in and identifying with Indian culture as fully as she does, she is able to re-integrate herself into Puritan culture, a reintegration which in turn highlights how Rowlandson's narrative describes both the permeability of the boundary set up by Puritans to differentiate themselves from their "enemies," and the permeability of the boundaries of Rowlandson's own subjectivity. Although her identification with the "*Heathens*" is qualified, she never rejects it outright: although Rowlandson notes the differences in facial features, she never recants the initial similarities. It is astonishing then that her voice–not only a feminine voice but one which issues from a subject who

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[4] As Laurel Ulrich remarks, "Mary Rowlandson's narrative is deeply and pervasively racist, yet, as many scholars have shown, it is not always difference which arouses fear of an alien person or culture so much as a perceived yet repellent sameness. This is amply illustrated in Mary's story. She speaks of the Indians as 'Salvage Bears' and 'roaring lions', yet the most striking and pervasive animal imagery in the narrative is that which she applies to herself. In captivity she had 'only a little Swill for the body, and then like a Swine, must ly down on the ground'" (Ulrich 229).

transgresses both the boundaries of gender roles and those of the Puritan settlement and culture–becomes authoritative to the extent that it gives us one of the most enduring Puritan legacies of King Phillip's War.

My investigation begins with the suggestion that subjectivity, perhaps particularly where women are concerned, may be formed with an emphasis on inclusive relationships rather than oppositional ones: an alternative emphasis from many post-structuralist theoretical models. A reading of Rowlandson's text suggests that rather than a single point in space, the subjectivity her text creates for her bears a closer resemblance to a web of various positions, endlessly and inclusively relational, identifying *with* rather than against "others." The resulting subject strives toward, and cannot avoid being, flexible, mutable and infinitely movable. To Mary Rowlandson, this method of "self-fashioning" gives the ability to survive her captivities–both Puritan and Indian (and I will explain the similarities between the two living situations later)–by allowing her to create her subjectivity almost by *bricolage*; she uses whatever tools and individuals are near her to create the relationships necessary to define herself, whether these relationships are linguistic or rhetorical, economic, personal, or physical. Her ability to move, adjust, and re-create herself is what both saves and damns her in the end, for once her self-defining relationships are formed, the ties they create are so strong and so imperative to her subject position that even as the situation changes and new relationships (or the resurrections of old ones) become necessary, traces are left behind.

Perhaps because of this, the transition from one set of identifying relationships to another does not occur altogether smoothly. As the individuals involved in these

relationships are removed from Rowlandson's purview, she experiences temporary confusion almost to the point of a loss of self. In the midst of the crisis this creates in Rowlandson's psyche, she must immediately work to form new relationships in order to re-orient and re-describe (or inscribe) her subject position. In the case of Rowlandson's captivity, these new relationships must be formed with the Indians whom she has been trained to regard as purely "other." These supplementary relationships, however temporary, leave permanent traces on her sense of identity, which becomes increasingly complex and composite.

Thus when Rowlandson finds herself in a strange culture, in an unfamiliar position as captive and servant rather than mistress, she must suddenly reformulate the position from which she speaks, since the props and people who sustained the relationships essential to her former subjectivity have been violently wrenched from her. She must also, however, continue to incorporate Puritan influences textually, to maintain her status and authority as a sanctified (albeit female) speaker. The emphasis on inclusive relationships and the need to survive in an alien culture necessitates identification *with* the alien culture and therefore participation in its "abominations." The ability to do this is itself an abomination for Rowlandson since it signals a flexibility in the definition of her identity that, in Puritan New England, would have been transgressive, given the rigidity of the physical boundaries of the settlements and of the ideological boundaries defining gender roles. Paradoxically, the tools that simultaneously enable this flexibility for Rowlandson and sanctify the abominations it requires are the Puritan practices of intense self-examination and compulsive biblical typology. Before proceeding to discuss the captivity

narrative specifically and the flexibility of Rowlandson's subjectivity within it, it is important to establish the function of relationships in Rowlandson's understanding of herself, and the emphasis her text reveals on a self defined by relationships to, rather than differences from, those around her.

I. Rowlandson's Cultural Landscape

Rowlandson gives us clues to her sense of self at the outset of her narrative. After describing the initial horror of the attack on the garrisoned house she lives in, she begins a lament in her "First Remove" reminiscent of the "*ubi sunt*" motif of Anglo-Saxon epic. The stripping away of her relational markers causes a perceived plunge in her own worth roughly equivalent to a total loss of self; "all" is a very inclusive pronoun:

> All was gone; my Husband gone, (at least separated from me, he being in the Bay; and, to add to my grief, the *Indians* told me they would kill him as he came homeward,) my Children gone, my Relations and Friends gone, our house and home, and all our comforts within door and without, all was gone, (except my life,) and I knew not but the next moment that might go too. (34)

Amy Lang comments that "[s]tripped of affectionate relationships, social identity, and familiar surroundings, Rowlandson is forced to re-create herself. As a woman, a wife, and a mother, she must define her 'life' in the absence of everything that once constituted life" (21). But Rowlandson's speech reveals things about her social state that Lang only hints at. Although Rowlandson lists her husband as her primary social relationship, and she relates the loss of him first after her wail of "All was gone," in her parenthetical

qualification she assures us that he was not, at this point, dead, but merely absent. She intimates that separation from him is nearly as catastrophic as his death would have been, since in either case the set of identifying relationships she associates with him is equally missing.

On the other hand, her sense of loss is not solely related to the perceived dissolution (however temporary) of this connection alone, but rather of all the web of relationships that together create her position in the world. Her own sense of self relies heavily upon her husband and her children, but equally important are her "Relations and Friends," and her "comforts within doors and without," which position her in society and dictate both her role as neighbour and her role in the trading economy of her settlement. Lack of access to this whole web, and not just to her husband, is what results in a complete breakdown of her identity. Thus her sense of self seems to emphasize "relationship to" (rather than "difference from"). The preeminence this web of relationships takes in her scheme of self-identification, and the need that she has for its entire presence to anchor her sense of self, becomes evident as she insists "all is gone" even though at this point she still has one child with her. That the presence of this child only merits comment after Rowlandson has recounted her losses, and that it seems to have little ameliorating effect–even in retrospect–on her adamant claim that "[all] was gone," suggests the depth of her need for her relational web.

Rowlandson's own life, in this early passage from the narrative, appears only as a bracketed afterthought, suggesting that without her primary points of reference it has no real place (or at least a very unstable one) in the main clause. The parentheses surrounding

her life also suggest an attempt to provide textual boundaries and reference points to replace those that have disappeared in the physical world. Above anything else, however, these brackets give a visible reminder in the text of the sudden and absolute barriers erected between her position and the web of relationships that has to this point stabilized it–particularly since a parenthetical phrase has far more mobility in a sentence and a less direct relationship to the other words and phrases than a non-parenthetical phrase. The parentheses also, almost paradoxically, seem to preserve their contents, enveloping and protecting "[her] life," as she begins to spin, or perhaps more properly knit, new connections and relationships in order to re-establish herself. Nonetheless, it is clear that although for a time her "life" can exist bracketed off, separate, individual, single and unified, she must create further connections in her new environment to sustain her subject position, or truly all will be lost.

However, the environment in which she will have to create these connections marks the one absolute difference/exclusion by which Rowlandson identifies herself. Although her subjectivity orients itself primarily by inclusive relationships within the Puritan community, of necessity the entire community must identify itself against its surroundings. The separation of the Puritan agrarian settlements from the "howling wilderness," accentuated by the need to build fortifications and by the climate of wartime, only served to strengthen Puritan preconceptions of themselves as a "people set apart." While living within the confines of the Puritan settlement and culture, the contrary emphases on inclusivity and exclusivity as individual and national influences on subjectivity present no confusion for Rowlandson. However, once outside the boundaries of the

settlement, they conflict with each other and place her in a position as precarious as it is paradoxical. In order to understand the depth of this paradox and its influence on Rowlandson specifically, it is important to comprehend the social climate in which Rowlandson was writing and publishing, and the roles of the captivity narrative genre and of the incorporative subject in the achievement of her public self-expression.

II. Captivity Narratives and Freedom of Speech

Christopher Castiglia, in defining the captivity narrative, contends that "[t]he captivity story became effective as propaganda in part because it offered a model for forming identity through opposition. . . Puritan narratives . . . valorized resistance to acculturation. When a Puritan survived captivity, the resistance to the captor's culture affirmed her or his place in a community defined by what the captive–and by extension the entire community–does not believe, what rituals he or she will not perform. . ." (Castiglia 23). However, given the astonishingly broad extent to which Mary Rowlandson not only did not resist, but actively participated in and even wrote about her participation in actions (if not rituals) that would have been quite frankly abominable to members of the Puritan culture, at least some of these stories must have the potential to assist in the explanation of the development of identity both for the Puritan community and for the individual captive in ways very different than those Castiglia's argument suggests. Narratives such as Mary Rowlandson's simultaneously allow both the illustration of the restrictions placed particularly on women when they are "free," and the disruption of exactly what Castiglia

suggests they confirm–the boundaries of the community and the secure place of the person in it, shored up by cultural taboos.

In fact, captivity narratives have a paradoxical ability to free the female writer sufficiently from the restrictive expectations of her culture to allow a new kind of speech. Thus ironically and perhaps somewhat surprisingly, Rowlandson's narrative of her captivity can be seen as the ur-text for "the first form of escape literature in America" (Burnham 72). Strange as this may seem, the freedom stems in part from the text's ability to describe a physical or material manifestation of much of women's lived psychological experience.[5] Certainly physical movement was restricted for women, especially in America, where the dangers of travel were highlighted by the unfamiliar landscape surrounding the settlements, as well as by the threats of violence and war. Furthermore, the hierarchical organization of the Puritan world view strictly governed the way women saw themselves in relation to the world. As Margaret H. Davis points out:

> Puritan society defined a woman's identity by the relationships that prevailed in her sphere; in the church, she was bride to Christ: in the home she was wife to husband, mother to child, goodwife to servant–designations altogether gender-based and hierarchical. Society's smooth operation depended on the cooperation of each of these binary oppositions in assuming the special and assigned duties and responsibilities of each one's place. In giving divine sanction to the relationship of the authority to the subject, in comparison to that of Christ to the Church, Puritan fathers canonized the hierarchy and warned that its breakdown would result in chaos. Therefore, for Puritans to resist authority, and especially for women to resist the authority of males, Christ's representatives on earth, was to resist the power of God himself, and

[5] Rowlandson's reactions at the end of the narrative to being "home" in the Puritan community express this "psychic confinement" to some extent, as section four of this chapter will discuss.

> consequently to risk damnation of their souls. (Davis 52)[6]

However inclusive and relational Rowlandson's subjectivity, the culture which forms it also insists upon strict authorial boundaries and permits little room for resistance to them.

Less tangible restrictions on women, however, worked to curtail their mental freedom, and came in the form of indictments of women who tried to enter the realm of public discourse. Although permitted to write letters and in some cases to translate classical works, and even cautiously encouraged to leave spiritual and moral instructions to their children in the form of "Mothers' Legacy Books," women were strongly and actively discouraged from launching their voices into the public arena. The most familiar indictments of women who did not abide by restrictions governing their speech come from the words of Thomas Parker's open letter to his sister Elizabeth Avery upon the publication of her book: ". . .your printing of a Book, beyond the custom of your Sex, doth rankly smell" (qtd. in Bremer 44) and from the words of Hugh Peter to Anne Hutchinson: "You have stept out of your place. You have rather bine a Husband than a Wife and a Preacher than a Hearer; and a Magistrate than a Subject. . ." (qtd. in Hall 382-83). Even when public speech by women was cautiously condoned by the Patriarchs of Puritan New England, the conditions and strictures placed upon the speakers were suffocating, as Davis points out:

> . . .the Puritan female who writes for publication may maintain her virtuous position only after her own sanctification has been affirmed, and only under

[6]Although as Ulrich points out, the relationships that defined women's subjectivities were not by any means limited to those which located them as subordinates to men. In addition, I would argue that these relationships that Davis describes are not altogether binary in nature.

> certain conditions defined as appropriate for the feminine bride of Christ. . . a woman's rhetoric must be confined to pious or otherwise traditional subjects, offered in humility, presented in deference to husband or other male authority, and composed in time not stolen from domestic responsibilities. (Davis 50)

The project of sanctification, then, is to position the woman speaker securely in a web of associations with men. She is the bride of Christ, she is the subordinate of her husband. She is subject to the Magistrate, and Hearer to the Preacher. She exists for men, not as a self-defined subject, but rather as a blank, a placeholder, a convenient point of reference. She is not authorized to speak unless she has permission to recite an edited script from specific masculine authorities. And this authorization is contingent upon her ability to speak within the boundaries set by the grantors of that permission, who will graciously lend women a masculine tongue so that they may agree with what men have already expressed.

Several critics, most notably Mitchell Breitweiser, have commented upon this very tone of "permission," and the resulting restrictions within which Rowlandson seems to work in her narrative. In a discussion of the relationship between the "Preface to the Reader" introducing her narrative, written "Per Amicum" (almost certainly Increase Mather), Breitweiser notes:

> At quite a few points in the narrative, especially at the beginning, she *hands herself over* to Mather's view of the war, searching through the minutiae of her experience for *evidence*, in part perhaps because she knew that this was the only game in town, the only way her thoughts and words could escape from the eventual oblivion of isolated memory. But this desire to share or participate leads down to a deeper layer of motivation, a desire to belong again among the lives of those from whom she had been torn, a desire not only to communicate with them but also to share meaning and thus to have been fully rather than only physically rescued, even though such a

> participation in meaning demands gruesome concessions, such as that her home was destroyed and her daughter killed because she had been inclined to smoking and to rendering insufficient attention to the true purpose of the Sabbath. (Breitweiser 8)

Here Breitweiser not only notes the restrictions placed on Rowlandson's narrative in order for it to be heard and read, he gives a clear if startling glimpse into the broader cultural restrictions placed not only on Mary's ability to speak but also on her patterns of thought. Re-establishing her identity within the Puritan community, given her experiences outside of it, is costly; the wages of sainthood seem almost greater here than the wages of sin. The wonder of it is that Rowlandson was able to speak at all–more wonderful that although her work is pious, it transgresses Puritan cultural norms wildly at many points.

The accounts of women captured by Indians do not tend to present conventional fairy-tale stories of meek and feeble "heroines" waiting to be delivered. Although this sort of characterization of the captive would surely reinforce the submissive and subordinate position of women, transforming the accounts into vessels of imperialist ideology, a trend toward this use of the narrative seems to happen only in nineteenth century America, when the popularity of the captivity narrative as a fictional motif useful in the grand design of nation-building became popular (James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* is perhaps the most famous example of this). The fates of Rowlandson's sister Elizabeth and of Goodwife Joslin, who want life only if it can be in terms they are familiar with, illustrate that passivity is deadly and rescue an unrealistic expectation. In contrast, early accounts of women captured by Indians seem to provide a locus of absolute authority for women and (paradoxically) a licenced freedom in terms of conduct and behaviour. Even behavioural

extremes enacted by women, such as Hannah Dustan's tomahawking slaughter of her captors and their children, were lauded (in Dustan's case even financially rewarded) and legislated as acceptable, often through typological references to such biblical events as Jael's assassination of Sisera (Judges 5:27).[7]

The transgressive nature even of the less obviously extreme captivity narratives becomes clear in Alden Vaughn and Edward Clark's study of the genre, where they claim that "[c]ut loose from his normal guideposts of language and social relationship, he [the captive] entertained ideas and values that colonial New England did not allow" (sic). The examples with which they illustrate this claim, all from women's stories, illustrate how subversive the genre could be: "Mary Rowlandson drank broth boiled from a horse's leg and ate bark from trees, and found them palatable; Hannah Swarton ate '*Groundnuts, Acorns, Purslain, Hogweed,* Weeds, Roots, and sometimes *Dogs Flesh*'; Elizabeth Hanson scavenged 'Guts and Garbage' of the beavers her masters had eaten" (12). The ingestion of foods generally not considered fit for human consumption, particularly alongside a group of people not considered by Puritans to be fully human, suggests that the captivity narrative allows special access to transgressive behaviour (and for women

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[7] Cotton Mather recounts Dustan's story first as an appendix to *Humiliations Followed With Deliverances* (1697) and again in both *Decennium Luctuostum* (1699) and *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) under the title "Dux Foemina Facti":

> But on April 30, While they were yet, it may be about an Hundred and Fifty Miles from the Indian Town, a little before Break of Day, when the whole Crew was in a Dead Sleep; (Reader, see if it prove not So!) One of these Women took up a Resolution, to imitate the Action of Jael upon Sisera; and being where she had not her own Life secured by any Law unto her, she thought she was not Forbidden by any Law to take away the Life of the Murderers, by whom her Child had been butchered.

transgressive acts included public speech and writing), particularly considering the fact that this behaviour did not excite disapproval even when publically reported.[8]

Gary Ebersole observes that Mather's preface to Rowlandson's narrative never mentions the author by name, erasing to some extent her public voice by not acknowledging her identity as author. Furthermore, the author of the preface subsumes her subjectivity under the banner of masculine authority: "[a]s far as Per Amicum is concerned," Ebersole says, "her public persona comes only through her husband" (Ebersole 45), as she is referred to as "the dear Consort of the said Reverend Mr Rowlandson" (Rowlandson 65). Likewise, her private persona, as far as Mather is concerned, seems to come from God, as she is also referred to as "his precious Servant, and Hand-maid" (Rowlandson 65). [9] Ebersole even comments that this view of Rowlandson's situation "was seemingly held [by Mather] from the beginning. In his diary on February 10, 1676, the day Rowlandson and her children were taken captive, Increase Mather wr[ites]: 'A dismal providence this day. Lancaster was set on by Indians. Mr. Rowlandson pastor of the church there. His house was assaulted. The Lord now speaks solemnly to his ministers, inasmuch as a minister's family is fallen upon, and his wife and children taken by the enemy.' On May 3 he note[s]: 'This day Mrs. Rowlandson was, by a wonderful hand of Providence, returned to her husband, after she had been absent eleven

[8]This transgression of both space and role is partially mitigated in Rowlandson's case by the inscription on the title page of the work: "Especially to dear friends and relations," likely an attempt to link the text to the "Mother's Legacy" genre. But the "Legacy" books, unlike Rowlandson's narrative, were rarely published.

[9] It should also be noted that her social position served as an important marker of her identity, since above all "Amicus" refers to her as "this Gentlewoman."

weeks in the hands of the Indians'" (Ebersole 45). Even her experience is not her own, but is rather a result of her husband's position. In fact, according to Mather, her experience constitutes merely an "absence" from her husband, and not a personal experience of her own at all–at least not one worthy of note at this point.[10] Similarly, she is not said to have been "freed" from the Indians, and there is not even mention of a ransom here. Rather, Mrs. Rowlandson is "returned" to her husband, as though she has been exchanged between one set of keepers and another.[11]

Given the difficulty of speech for women in a culture such as that of Puritan New England, where a woman's speaking position was so severely limited, how then has Rowlandson succeeded in outmanoeuvring, as Breitweiser elegantly puts it, the "eventual oblivion of isolated memory?" In some ways, Rowlandson's ability to record her personal experiences in a public way, even though she is a woman, is easy to explain. Several critics have approached the issue, notably Lang, who puts it this way:

> Rowlandson's remarkable capacity to bring her experience and emotions as a captive into perfect accord with the meanings offered by official Puritan culture is, of course, what enables her, as a woman, to speak publicly. She can, as the writer of the preface suggests, 'come. . .into the publick' to tell her story because she has learned through her affliction 'how. . .to talk of

[10] Having said this, I think it is interesting to point out that Rowlandson's narrative does not take second place to her husband's sermon (with which it was published) for long, as Derounian observes: "Before printing information, the London title page refers to Rev. Rowlandson's 'Last Sermon' but presents it as strictly secondary to the main narrative, to which it is 'annexed'; indeed, Rev. Rowlandson himself takes second place to his wife by being described as 'Husband to the said Mrs. *Rowlandson*'" (Derounian 1988, 253).

[11] At one point in the narrative, Rowlandson herself uses this kind of rhetoric to describe her situation, as she asks her "master whither he would sell [her] to [her] husband" (86).

> God's acts and to speak of and publish his wonderful works.' She can, without loss of modesty, 'thrust' her story 'into the press' because the story she tells is, paradoxically, a story of not telling, a story of being 'still' and awaiting the Lord. (25)[12]

Breitweiser goes somewhat farther in discussing the role of Puritan typology in allowing Rowlandson's voice to be heard, arguing that "Typology takes up a concrete experience of a person. . . thing, or event, highlights a trait that reveals the referent's participation in a preordained and historically repetitive category, and then declares the referent's other traits (those that might make the referent's emblematicity seem partial, unimportant, secondary, or derived) to be inconsequential for determining the referent's state of being" (Breitweiser 24). He also suggests that, for Rowlandson, in the context of her own community, this meant that

> Rowlandson's task was to *complete* Puritanism by affirming that her extraordinary experience was extraordinary because of the clarity with which it typified or exemplified a general meaning that had descended upon the Massachusetts of the late 1670s with renewed force. She was remarkable for having been at the very centre of meaning, rather than outside of it in some discursive equivalent to the wilderness: Rather than having been exiled or sent out from Puritanism, she had been brought close to its lucid essence. (Breitweiser 8)

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[12] Much of the masculine authority that grants Rowlandson's permission to speak, apart from the introduction and her husband's sermon, comes from her continual references to Biblical quotations that almost provide an exegesis of her experience. Neal Salisbury notes that these appear in her narrative even before, within the context of her captivity, she has access to a Bible. He comments that "[s]ome commentators have pointed to these references as evidence that the narrative was significantly shaped by clerical influence, either Mather, Joseph Rowlandson, or someone else," and that there is "no reason to doubt the probability that others, including members of the clergy, read the manuscript and made suggestions to its author." But he also notes that "Rowlandson, as the daughter of a woman who converted to Puritanism independently of her husband and as the wife of a minister, was sufficiently steeped in the Bible and in Puritan interpretation of it to draw such conclusions on her own" (46-47).

Here Breitweiser, like Lang, hints at something unique about Rowlandson's ability to situate herself which allows her to be heard over the rhetorical sound barriers placed around her by her church. Although she is, as he says, "at the very centre of meaning," and her experience has privileged her, and although she has gained the power of speech not by challenging the Word but by becoming central to it and somehow making it her own, she also transgresses the boundaries erected by Puritan culture and custom. Consequently, the location of that centre of meaning must be as moveable as the reference points used to locate it. And, since Rowlandson's whole journey is about movement and re-movement, the reference points are continually changing.

Thus Rowlandson's perception of the boundaries defining Puritan culture changes as she simultaneously carries them with her and abandons them as irrelevant. As Burnham notes, the most appealing facet of captivity narratives to their readers may have been "the freedom from traditional morality granted the captive by virtue of her or his need to survive within a hostile landscape and to adapt to a radically different culture" (72). Although Burnham goes on to suggest that "[n]arratives like Mary Rowlandson's which recalled such experiences inevitably revealed the boundaries, linguistic and otherwise, of the Puritan culture which produced them" (73), at least in Rowlandson's case these boundaries prove both more flexible and less restrictive than her culture was willing to recognize. Thus Rowlandson's ability, in the course of the narrative, to weave almost seamlessly in and out of different terms of identification, and at times to use several of them simultaneously, requires further explanation. Rather than seeing Rowlandson's narrative position as a compromise, a capitulation to the dictates of the Puritan patriarchs

in order to "fit the patriarchal terms of identity" while still creating "her own singular, though conforming, voice" (Breitweiser 56), or as "a collision between cultural ideology and the real in American literature" (4), it is possible to view it in terms of a "collusion" of cultures both of which she seems capable of inhabiting. The result is a multiple, rather than a singular voice.

Although critics tend to try to differentiate the several voices she speaks in, or even to specify exactly which "camp" she identifies with at which point during the narrative,[13] the real interest in Rowlandson's text comes from her ability to slide from one cultural space into another, including many identities within her own, apparently unaware of the discrepancies between her speeches. Dissecting her voices limits their impact and their power; her voice is more than the sum of its parts. To insist that there must be several different voices, each one exclusive of the others, is to ignore the possibilities of multiplicity and mutability and to insist on a very inflexibly defined idea of subjectivity itself. The subjectivity which Mary Rowlandson's narrative presents us with is the farthest thing from stable and singular, but this does not in any way detract from her individuality or, apparently, from her ability to speak. On the contrary, because her subjectivity becomes inclusive and moveable, the self she creates becomes even more complex and differentiated from those around her. What becomes a problem for her is that this carries

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[13] Many critics have discussed the duality or multiplicity of voices with which Rowlandson speaks; however, the critical trend is to separate those voices and define each of them individually, effectively dissecting the subjectivity Rowlandson creates for herself. On Rowlandson's clinging to Puritan culture see, for example, Derounian 1987 (82), Burnham (61), Dietrich (436). Alternatively, some critics find her to have crossed completely over into the culture of her captors, for example Stanford (35), Woodard (121-22), and to some extent Toulouse (669).

over when she re-enters the Puritan settlement and culture. Her reintegration into Puritan culture is hampered in the long-term (and possibly permanently) by the traces her captive experience leaves on her sense of self.

And yet, the way that Rowlandson's subjectivity shapes and develops while in captivity does not exclude the Puritan influences of her former life. Using typology in creative ways, she inserts biblical quotations at almost every turn in her narrative. Indeed, these make her speech as Puritan Goodwife possible at times when her identification with her captors seems otherwise complete. Her introduction of many of the biblical quotations she uses show yet another way in which her developing self slides between apparently impermeable barriers, enfolding and incorporating aspects which ought to be denied and/or repugnant to her. She introduces the verse which apparently vindicates or explains her theft of food from an English child by stating that she may say "as *Job*." The chapter and verse references which identify this text allow the reader to interpret her as saying that her text simply reproduces what the *book* of Job says at this point, and that she is merely copying text. However, there is a certain amount of ambiguity in her address here that surfaces in other areas. She uses the same form of introduction, for example, in the "Thirteenth Remove," where she intones: "I could tell the Lord, as *Hezechiah*, ver.3, *Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth*" (91). The clue here is that the biblical book referred to is actually Isaiah; the *speaker* is Hezechiah (who does not have a book of his own). Thus the reader could fill in the possible ellipsis and read "as Hezechiah *did*," or simply read it as it is written, so that Rowlandson herself speaks as Hezechiah.

At numerous points in her narrative, Rowlandson introduces other speeches in the same way, and thus is able to take over the voices of several of the powerful Israelite Old Testament prophets and kings revered and respected by the Puritans.[14] In a sense, she not only gives herself licence to speak in these various personae, she takes on the role of prophet for the whole colony within the confines of her only known work. She even, in this brief space, takes on the role of interpreter of scriptures for others:

> And now could I see that Scripture verified, (there being many Scriptures which we do not take notice of, or understand, till we are afflicted,) *Mic.* Vi.14, *Thou Shalt eat and not be satisfied.* Now might I see more than ever before, the miseries that sin hath brought upon us. (93)

Her use of an inclusive plural pronoun here (us) suggests the flexible boundaries around the subjectivity she creates. The role of prophet and interpreter falls almost exclusively in the province of men (as the indictment of Anne Hutchinson illustrates), but within the confines of this text, outside the boundaries of the Puritan settlement and under the extreme circumstances ("Now I may say with *David*, *2 Sam.* xxiv.14, *I am in a great strait*"), Rowlandson finds the freedom to speak in these roles with a feminine voice. Here the "great strait" itself, rather than the Puritan patriarchy, is what enables her to "say with *David*."

Not only does this speech transgress the boundaries of the gender role she was assigned by her culture at birth, it also transgresses her status, assigned by "Amicus," as layperson and "Hand-maid" of the Lord, raising her to a much more exalted position than she could otherwise have expected to reach. While she gives the appearance of needing

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[14] For example, she likens herself at times to David, Jonathan, Jacob, and even Isaiah.

the authority of David even to indicate that her situation is grave, as though without his jurisdiction she could not claim that her experiences fall outside of the ordinary, she is also able, through the voice of Hezekiah, to issue commands to her God. In the end, although she speaks "with" or even "as" various Biblical patriarchs, she never gives her whole text over to them, nor to the masculine authorities who wish to direct its focus and meaning. She retains her own sense of self and subjectivity, incorporating theirs into it, finding numerous relations through which she continually moves her position to suit her needs.

Not only does Rowlandson incorporate other subject positions into her own subjectivity, she also, from time to time, symbolically rejects some of the restrictive positions placed upon her by the Puritan community. One particularly troubling incident involves her eating a fetal fawn: "and it was so young and tender, that one might eat the bones as well as the flesh, and yet I thought it very good" (93). This symbolic consumption of a child, bones and all, within the womb, undermines the image of the caring and concerned *alma mater*, replacing it with the archetype of the devouring mother–certainly not a Puritan-friendly concept. Emphasizing this departure from the role of mother is the fact that although Rowlandson enjoys seeing her children and from time to time mourns their fate, she is obviously freer to move about without them. Having had them removed from her care, she is no longer responsible for their lot. In a sense, this frees her from maternal responsibilities and subverts one role that confines and defines her in her life before captivity. However, Rowlandson's ability to transcend the boundaries of gender roles set by her community is far exceeded by her startling ability to explain and even sanctify her extensive participation in and assimilation into the culture of her captors.

As the next section will show, the critical rhetorical resource that enables this process is Rowlandson's facility with scripture.

III. Integration and the Sanctity of Abominations

It might be expected that, writing in hindsight after her return to Puritan society, Rowlandson would shape her narrative to define more clearly the separation between Puritans and Indians. However, what happens instead is a chronicling of the process of her de- and re-acculturation first to the wilderness and Indians, and then back to the Puritan fold. At the outset of her narrative, Rowlandson identifies only with the English settlers, whose company, companionship, and ideas of community have formed her frame of reference over the whole course of her life. Her use of pronouns is unambiguous, and her characterization of the Indians is equally clear. Not only are they "Infidels" (69) set well apart from Christians, they are "Wolves," "a company of hell-hounds," and "ravenous Beasts" (70). Rowlandson also characterizes the Christians as "Sheep," an image which links them both to Christ and to each other. Since sheep are not found singly but in flocks, and move almost as a single entity rather than as a group of individuals, the illustration Rowlandson uses to describe her connection to her community is so strong that it suggests her perception of her own identity is communal as well. And yet, even as her "company of Sheep" is "torn by Wolves," she must somehow begin to reconstruct herself. This construction begins, in the text, as soon as she is shed from the flock and taken captive by the Indians:

> I had often before this said, that if the *Indians* should come, I should chuse rather to be killed by them than taken alive; but when it came to the trial my mind changed; their glittering Weapons so daunted my Spirit, that I chose rather to go along with those (as I may say) ravenous Beasts, than at that moment to end my dayes. (70)[15]

This decision to live, rather than to go like a lamb to the slaughter, begins the process of re-identification for Rowlandson. For the bracketing off of "her life" and her identification as a subject to become possible, Rowlandson must begin to distinguish herself from the flock, a distinction her sister Elizabeth refuses to make, as she prays for and receives death before capture.

Just as individual sheep are nearly impossible to distinguish when they move *en masse*, Rowlandson's language at the outset of this narrative is so inclusive that she mentions herself only incidentally, when her story necessitates that she tell us a bullet has entered her side. But not even this mark singles her out, for she shares the wound with her infant daughter Sarah, who is hit with the same shot, and who is so much more badly hurt that Rowlandson's own wound pales in comparison. Only in her decision to live does Rowlandson set her self apart as something unique and precious, if difficult for her to define.

Rowlandson's life, when she is first captured, centres on her child and then on the other Christian captives with whom she finds herself. With these links to her former

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[15] The bracketed phrase "as I may say" suggests even here the need for permission to speak. However, the implications are rather more complex, since the phrase precedes a metaphorical description of her perception of the Indians. The only reason she may use this metaphorical language with authority lies in the fact that she not only witnessed but actually experienced this situation. Thus "may" would indicate ability rather than permission–an ability granted by the authority of her experience, and not by the authority of the Puritan church.

identity, she continues to refer to the world around her as a "vast and desolate Wilderness" (72), and to the Indians as "inhumane creatures" (73). And yet in the initial stages of her captivity, after she has been torn from her home but before she has time to identify with a new one, Rowlandson's ability to define herself, and thus her ability to speak, seems impaired. When she asks whether she may stay the night in an abandoned farmhouse, the Indians answer her with a question: "What, will you love *English-men* still?" (71). Rowlandson cannot answer, and this unanswered question reverberates throughout the course of her narrative, as at times she must reject the behaviour of the English as improper, according to her beliefs. At this point, however, her inability to answer such a question comes down to her inability to identify fully as an Englishwoman–not because she is in America, but because she is now completely out of reach of those things (the first of which must be her husband) that defined her existence. Does she still love English men? Is she still English? From what position can she speak, being unable to answer these questions, and having, in deciding to live, left the flock in which she identified herself simply as one of many sheep? With this "betrayal" of her own identity, Rowlandson becomes to some extent complicit in the destruction of her ability to define herself as exclusively Puritan. As she turns her back on the town, and even as she turns to writing her experience years later, she finds that the destruction of her cultural markers renders her absolutely speechless: "It is not my tongue, or pen can express the sorrows of my heart, and bitterness of my spirit, that I had at this departure" (71).

Still in the company of other Puritan captives, Rowlandson claims ("as *David*") that she would have "fainted," had she not been able to cling to the shards of her belief.

The loss not only of speech but almost of consciousness, and with it, the loss of a sense of self, seem so close here that they indicate a crisis of subjecthood brought on by the very fragmented nature of the remnants of the Puritan relationships to which she clings. Her immediate descent into self-recrimination[16] also serves as a desperate attempt to cement a relationship–even (or perhaps particularly) one with God–that has some chance of maintaining its "normal" status in her life.

As she leaves the "little company" that she has, her daughter, her "little Cousins and Neighbours," and "that poor woman," Goodwife Joslin (77), and thus loses the opportunity to create sustaining relationships with people of her own culture, she is forced to begin to re-identify herself in different terms, since she no longer has even the faintest echoes of her former life to guide her. Thus, within a paragraph of the description of her departure from her "little company," her use of pronouns shifts dramatically for the first time:

> But, to return to my own Journey,–we travelled about half a day, or a little more, and came to a desolate place in the Wilderness; where there were no Wigwams or Inhabitants before; we came about the middle of the afternoon to this place; cold, and wet, and snowy, and hungry, and weary, and no refreshing (for man) but the cold ground to sit on, and our poor *Indian cheer*. (78)

In the space of a phrase, "my own Journey" becomes "ours." The inclusive pronoun joins Rowlandson to her captors, and acknowledges on some level that her hardships are also theirs. As well, rather than being defined against Christians and a Puritan settlement, the

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[16] "I then remembered how careless I had been of Gods holy time: how many Sabbaths I had lost and misspent, and how evilly I had walked in Gods sight; which lay so close unto my spirit, that it was easie 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" (74).

wilderness is now defined against "Wigwams" and their "Inhabitants." The Indians themselves have gone from beasts to men, and most significantly, Rowlandson speaks of "our poor *Indian cheer.*" Not only does she include the Indians in her own "cultural" group (that is, she acknowledges them as "man"), she includes herself in theirs. Her identification of herself, although clearly not entirely divorced from Puritanism, has already become something more complex, a fact made all the more compelling since it was recorded years later and in retrospect.[17]

For Rowlandson, the ability not only to construct herself, but to construct herself in such a way that she can negotiate inside the Indian community while keeping herself aloof from it, in a sense being "in the world but not of it," is a matter of survival. Her identification with her captors has to be sufficient for her to participate in their culture. The penalty for not doing so, as her recounting of Goodwife Joslin's death illustrates, is torture and death:

> having much grief upon her Spirit about her miserable condition, being so near her time, [Goodwife Joslin] would be often asking the Indians to let her go home; they, not being willing to do that, and yet vexed with her importunity, gathered a great company together about her, and stript her naked, and set her in the midst of them; and when they had sung and danced about her (in their hellish manner) as long as they pleased; they knockt her on the head, and the child in her arms with her. When they had done that they made a fire, and put them both into it; and told the other Children that were with them, that if they attempted to go home, they would serve them in like manner. (78)

Not surprisingly, Rowlandson's textual inclusion of herself in the Indians' society occurs

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[17] Rowlandson was captured early in 1676, but her account did not appear in print until 1682, after the death of her first husband. It was thought that Rowlandson had died shortly thereafter, but David Greene's 1985 study shows convincingly that she had, by this time, remarried and was therefore more properly "Mary Talcott."

at the end of this same paragraph.

Rowlandson's further attempts–conscious or not–to conflate the Indian culture with her own as she comes to link her own sense of self with theirs are of considerable interest. As the "Fifth Remove" opens, she tells us that "The occasion. . .of their moving at this time was the *English Army*, it being near and following them. . . [they] chose out some of their stoutest men, and sent them back to hold the *English Army* in play whilst the rest escaped; and then, like Jehu, they marched on furiously. . ." (78). Not only does Rowlandson apparently abjure any personal connection with the army, which she refers to as "English" rather than "mine" or "ours," "Christian," or even simply "the army," she uses a fascinating and somewhat startling biblical reference to describe the movement of the Indians themselves. Rather than the expected allusion to the Babylonians, the Syrians, or one of the other well-known persecutors of the biblical Israelites, or even to the Egyptians, their biblical captors, Rowlandson chooses to liken the Indians to Jehu, one of the famous kings of Israel, anointed by God and Elisha.[18] Jehu is appointed by God to rise against King Joram and supplant him, since Joram is the last king of Israel's fourth dynasty, the dynasty whose second king, Ahab, consorts with the infamous Jezebel and the priests of Baal. Jehu himself is said to have "destroyed Baal out of Israel" (2 Kings 10: 28). This is an astonishing association to make in light of the Indians' status as "heathen," and as devil-worshippers, the Semitic god Baal being linked symbolically with Satan through its appellation as "Baalzebub" (2 Kings 1: 16). Clearly, this move incorporates the Indians with the "elect," but it also places the Puritans, whom the Indians wish to drive

[18] 2 Kings 9, 10.

out of America, in an uncomfortable typological position.

This textual move sets up another Biblical reference with equally surprising ramifications, which Rowlandson introduces at the beginning of the "Sixth Remove," closely following her reference to Jehu. As the Indians set fire to their Wigwams and prepare to move on, Rowlandson is forced to go with them, "leaving farther my own Country." As she does, she notes that she then "understood something of *Lot's* Wife's Temptations, *when she looked back*" (80). What Lot's wife looked back toward, of course, was Sodom and Gomorrah, a rather shocking textual parallel for the Puritan settlement, particularly considering the company Rowlandson was in. For if she is Lot's wife, then surely the people she accompanies are Lot and his family. And when Lot and his family leave the city behind, they are unquestionably the righteous ones, even if Lot's daughters later transgress Biblical law.

Certainly Rowlandson's implicit characterization of the Puritan settlement as Sodom and Gomorrah would fit to some extent with its characterization in the Jeremiads being preached at the time of King Phillip's war, but given Rowlandson's situation and her recent (if subconscious) endorsement of her captors in her comparison of them with Jehu, it seems unlikely that her use of this reference can be explained this simply. Rather, this small series of references clearly shows the traces of those relationships upon which Rowlandson's subjectivity before her capture has been built, inextricably entwined with those relationships she was rapidly agglomerating in her drive to reconstruct a subjectivity in the wake of the events which removed all her cultural markers. She cannot extract her sense of self from the community of captors to which she now undeniably belongs any

more than she can entirely rid herself of the Puritan frames of reference that have always served to position her sense of identity. In the end, the set of relationships she develops in captivity will become so vital that she will bring the wilderness back with her when she finally comes "home," just as the Puritan community is so crucial to her being that it stays with her in the "wilderness" and the Indian community.

One of the most complex and revealing incidents in terms of Rowlandson's identification of herself occurs during her flight from the English Army, as she and her captors cross a river which stymies the army itself:

> on Monday they set their Wigwams on fire, and away they went: on that very day came the *English* Army after them to this River, and saw the smoke of their Wigwams; and yet this River put a stop to them. God did not give them courage or activity to go after us; we were not ready for so great a mercy as victory and deliverance; if we had been, God would have found out a way for the *English* to have passed this River, as well as for the *Indians*, with their *Squaws* and *Children*, and all their *Luggage*. (79-80)

At the outset of this passage, Rowlandson distances herself again from her captors: they set *their* Wigwams on fire, and away *they* went. She also distances herself from the English army, her pious words a thin veil for a rather acrimonious indictment of their lack of fortitude. Yet in the same sentence she reassociates herself not only with her captors but, through typology, with the rest of the Puritan community in America. The army should have gone after "us;" "we" were not ready for deliverance; if "we" had been, God would have found a way to engineer it. Rowlandson has already stated that at this point, she is the only English Christian among her captors, her "little company" having been left behind. Thus the inclusive "us" indicates a connection with her captors who, although they are "the enemy," are clearly as in need of "deliverance" (physical and spiritual) as

Rowlandson is herself, and apparently as potentially capable of receiving it, which in turn calls into question whose "victory" Rowlandson advocates here. But through the typological associations she draws here, "we" also refers to the rest of the Puritan community, which contemporary patriarchs of the church saw to be falling away from the original design of the colony, as well as from the church itself.

Interestingly enough, in this passage, although Rowlandson refers to the "*Indians*, with their *Squaws* and *Children*, and all their *Luggage*" crossing the river, and the "*English*" emphatically *not* crossing (which calls to mind Moses, the Egyptians, and the Red Sea), she never includes herself in any of these references. This may suggest that she has simply slipped herself in with her captors; however, because they are catalogued so specifically, this seems farfetched. No more is she part of the "English" crew who are unable to cross, although she is more than willing to suggest that her own salvation is in as great a peril as theirs. It is almost as though Rowlandson is able to go halfway across the river and no farther, as though she inhabits some liminal zone, the intersection of two overlapping communities which in the Puritan frame of reference *must* be mutually exclusive, singular in her ability to belong at once to both and therefore to neither. This movement between associations typifies the subjectivity that Rowlandson develops for herself, as she identifies herself in turn with the Indians and the English by using the flexibility afforded by typological association with the Israelites.

"Pushed outside of the familiar," Dietrich notes, "Rowlandson's autobiographical self's multiplicity–a self that includes conflict and paradox–is versatile and boundary-crossing" (430). The mobility and flexibility as well as the transgressive nature of her

subjectivity deepens with her sometimes revoltingly detailed accounts of her eating habits. She even charts her own acculturation-by-starvation succinctly for her readers:

> The first week of my being among them I hardly eat any thing; the second week I found my stomach grow very faint for want of something; and yet 'twas 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 and die before I could eat such things, yet) they were pleasant and savoury to my taste. (79)

This statement is tantamount to an admission that she had acculturated to a considerable degree, echoing as it does her admission that she has chosen life in captivity over death. The scruples that had kept her apart and made her different have vanished; she has ingested more than "filthy trash," she has ingested the culture.[19]

Although this is by and large her whole explanation of her ability to eat this "filthy trash," near the end of the narrative she inserts a very curious and apparently tangential anecdote that seems disconnected from the rest of the story. It occurs in the "Nineteenth Remove," and involves a discussion with a "Praying-*Indian*," a person whose identity was at least as vexed as Rowlandson's own. The account appears apropos of nothing, in the middle of a paragraph about the price of her redemption:

> There was another Praying-*Indian*, who told me, that he had a brother, that would not eat horse; his conscience was so tender and scrupulous (though as large as hell, for the destruction of poor *Christians*). Then, he said, he

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[19] Davis comments that "As well as looking into the face of God, Rowlandson has looked into her own soul and found a self capable of a range of alternatives: of slipping into bestiality, of surviving outside of the community, of spiritualizing ominous reality. Only the latter is fully compatible with Puritan ideology" (Davis 58). It is also interesting to note that, in keeping with the idea of acculturation by ingestion, Rowlandson's narrative is divided into "removes," a word sometimes used to describe the courses of a meal.

> read that Scripture to him, 2 Kings, 6.25. *There was a famine in* Samaria, *and behold they besieged it, until an Asses head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a Kab of Doves dung, for five pieces of silver.* He expounded this place to his brother, and shewed him that it was lawfull to eat that in a Famine which is not at another time. And now, says he, he will eat horse with any *Indian* of them all. (98)

It is difficult to completely understand Rowlandson's motivation for including this anecdote, since what follows this passage is a catalogue of offenses perpetrated by Praying Indians. If the purpose is to horrify her reader with an example of how Praying Indians use scripture to legitimize illicit activities, the point is lost, since Rowlandson has already admitted several times to having eaten horse with great relish. But if the purpose is to excuse her own eating behaviours, why put the excuse in the mouth of an Indian? Even the rhetoric the man uses as he speaks to her sounds odd. Now his brother "will eat horse with any *Indian* of them all," as though it were only Indians who ate horse. Surely if this is the case, Rowlandson must be Indian? The other possibility, of course, is that having already appealed to the authority of the Puritan clergy, Rowlandson has appealed to a further authority in the figure of a detested praying Indian, showing an unsettling submission not only to an Indian Master and Mistress (her captors) but also to an Indian spiritual advisor. The relationships which position her as speaking subject, and which allow her to speak in defence of her own actions, have certainly shifted. They find their basis, at least momentarily, in her Indian community rather than her Puritan one.

The implications of this biblical interjection are further complicated by the rest of the story attached to it in its original context.[20] Directly after the description in 2 Kings of

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[20] Although Puritans could and not infrequently did use biblical quotations out of context, the fact that this section of 2 Kings comes up twice in the narrative suggests that

the prices of various foods in Samaria during the famine caused by a Syrian siege comes another story which deals far more directly with the eating habits of the Israelites while under famine conditions. King Joram of Israel is walking along the city wall when he hears a woman cry out to him from the city below:

> And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help my lord, O king. And he said, if the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn-floor, or out of the winepress? And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, this woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son. (2 Kings 6: 26-30)

That this story rounds out the accounts of the price of asses' heads and wild onions[21] during a siege absolutely abnegates the force of that particular scripture as vindicating any kind of eating practice in time of famine. Furthermore, the influence of this story of child cannibalism resonates eerily in the narrative, particularly with Rowlandson's description of intense sensory enjoyment when eating the fetal fawn, "the bones as well as the flesh."

Perhaps the most notable taboo involving food that Rowlandson breaks concerns not what she ingests, but how she comes by it. After complaining time and again that her captors steal food from her, whether it be horse liver or Indian corn, in the "Eighteenth Remove" she herself resorts to this behaviour:

> Then I went to another Wigwam, where there were two of the *English Children*: The Squaw was boiling horses feet; then she cut me off a little piece, and gave one of the *English Children* a piece also: Being very hungry, I had quickly eat up mine; but the Child could not bite it, it was so

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Rowlandson was well acquainted with the story in its entirety.

[21] Later translations use "wild onion" rather than "dove's dung."

> tough and sinewy, but lay sucking, gnawing, chewing, and slobbering it in the mouth and hand; then I took it of the Child, and eat it myself; and savoury it was to my taste. (96)

The shock here comes particularly from the identity of the person from whose mouth she has taken her food. Not only has she allied herself with her captors by engaging in theft, the behaviour she complains of most, she has firmly entrenched herself as one of them by stealing not from an Indian but from an English child. However, the mutability of her sense of self is by this time so ingrained that she moves, though uneasily, from the Indian camp, as it were, back into the Puritan settlement, by using a biblical quotation to explain not her action, but her sensation: ". . .I may say as *Job*, chap. Vi. 7, *The things that my Soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat*. Thus the Lord made that pleasant and refreshing which another time would have been an Abomination" (96). Quite apart from her questionable interpretation of this verse,[22] the question remains whether by "Abomination" she means the eating of a horse's foot, or the taking of food from the mouth of a child. Whatever the case, Rowlandson's ability to slide between these cultures, justifying the one with the other, becomes a licence to speak, for when her Mistress tells her that if she continues to beg they will "knock her on the head," she replaces her original lack of response to such words with a strong retort, telling her captors that "they had as good knock me on the head as starve me to death" (96).

Rowlandson's rise to what amounts to economic independence within the Indian community signals yet another slippage between identities for her, and, in this case, the

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[22] Neither this verse, taken from Job's reply to Eliphaz's first speech, nor the context from which it comes, suggest that "sorrowful meat" is in any way "pleasant and refreshing."

identities mesh almost seamlessly, giving her the power to speak and a place in both the Puritan and the Indian cultures. Although she sews and knits for her captors, her handicrafts are strictly European in their origin and design. She makes stockings, shirts, and bonnets, knitting and sewing her way into commerce within the community. This exchange, with its emphasis on her self-reliance, both allows Rowlandson to keep her ties to the Puritan culture and links her to the community into which, by her own machinations resulting from her need to survive, she has integrated herself. In addition, this move creates a freedom previously unavailable to Rowlandson: she is able to carve out her own place in a community, rather than relying upon her husband's (or her father's) status for her sense of self.

This place she makes gives her an astonishing degree of authority. When she makes a shirt for a "sorry *Indian*" (and it is not clear here whether we are supposed to pity or despise him) who does not pay her, she takes matters into her own hands:

> But he living by the River side, where I often went to fetch water, I would often be putting of him in mind, and calling for my pay: at last he told me if I would make another shirt, for a *Papoos* not yet born, he would give me a knife, which he did when I had done it. I carried the knife in, and my master asked me to give it him, and I was not a little glad that I had any thing that they would accept of, and be pleased with. (84)

Rowlandson's speech has been facilitated not only by her economic relationship with her debtor, but also by her understanding and acceptance of her position as servant to her master. These were both positions she would have been familiar with in the Puritan community, although she was more likely to have experienced the former position than the latter. But the relative ease of her transitions into these relationships, and their ability to allow her speech, give some illustration of why, as Ulrich remarks, "[e]ven more important

than age [in determining the outcome of captivity] . . . was gender. Although equal proportions of males and females were eventually ransomed, males were more likely to escape or die, females to stay with their captors. Males resisted; females adapted" (204).

Rowlandson continues to focus nearly exclusively on her interaction with her captors rather than those she has with other English captives, even though it becomes clear as the narrative progresses is that this becomes a choice rather than a necessity. By the time her journey reaches its "Eighth Remove," the group she travels with meets other groups in a mass camp, and Rowlandson begins to mention the presence of other English captives. However, her text and manner of speaking remain much more attached to and dependent upon her captors and her Indian community. Rather than focussing her narrative on her interactions with the various English captives, she writes about them infrequently and almost parenthetically.

In fact, Rowlandson's only exceptions to the rule of reporting only her interactions with Indians occur when she recounts situations that clearly show how her own facility to move between cultures contrasts starkly with the inability of those whom she helps. Apart from the unfortunate Goodwife Joslin, both of the captives who fall into this category happen to be men–thus effecting a reversal of the usual and culturally accepted gender dynamic. In the "Eleventh Remove," Rowlandson even acts as a translator for another captive, a man named Thomas Read. Curiously, he himself seems unable to speak, and it is Rowlandson's ability to cross between cultures, to juggle two different systems of identification, that allows her to take on the role of speaker here, both logically because she is the one who knows both languages, and symbolically, since her position, and hence

her subjectivity, has already been established in this context. Thomas Read has just had his own sense of self disrupted cataclysmically, in much the same way that Rowlandson's own had been, and yet although she shed no tears until well into her captivity, his flow freely at this point. Not only do tears impair the ability to speak in a purely physical sense, they transgress the boundaries of the body, and thus compromise the tight, singular subjectivity that relies for its coherence upon forming boundaries to exclude others. Thus Read's ability to speak is hampered because the boundaries of his subjectivity are not left intact–Thomas Read has become a "leaky vessel."[23] Not only is Mary Rowlandson less concerned about the boundaries of her body, breached as they were at the outset of her captivity by her wound, her liquid ability to move between and among sets of reference points, incorporating them rather than excluding them, allows her to speak even when she has no single position to speak from.

Even Rowlandson's relationship to the natural world changes the longer she stays with the Indians. The howling wilderness, although it remains strange and threatening, does soften to some extent, and Rowlandson is quite able to survive in it without terror

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[23] This pattern repeats itself when Mary encounters the only other captive she records interacting with (apart from Goodwife Joslin). When she comes across "one *John Gilberd* of *Springfield*" she finds him naked from the waist down and suffering from dysentery. Although he has given up and protests that he cannot move, Mary is able to convince him to help himself and eventually gets him to a fire. Once again, his body is leaky and his selfhood undermined; his will for death amounts to a surrender of individual consciousness. Rowlandson, on the other hand, is able to help him to a place where he can regain his bodily integrity, at least temporarily. The significance of this as a boundary-crossing or transgressive incident becomes clear in the reactions of the Indians in the encampment. Rowlandson reports that as a result of her actions on Gilberd's behalf, "it was noised about, that I was running away and getting the *English* youth, along with me" (90).

when she becomes lost on her own. Curiously, she is on her way to see her son when this happens. Young Joseph seems to remain, through his periodic appearances in her narrative, a link to her former life, and losing her way when trying to find him acts as a symbolic marker, foretelling the troubles she has readjusting to life in the Puritan colony after her redemption. It also allows an illustration of the ease with which she now moves through the territory of her captors. The landscape about her, even while she is lost, does not present the kinds of sinister dangers one might expect. Rather than a howling wilderness, she sees simply "Hills" and "Swamps" (84). As well, although she attributes her lack of terror and ease of movement to the "power and goodness of God" (84), even the Indians she meets offer her no affront. The extraordinary freedom of movement she experiences in this episode not only fulfills the imaginative requirements of escape literature but also renders even more poignant her final admission that she has had to (re)learn to "stand still."

In a development parallel to her changing relationship with the wilderness, the concept of "home" also changes for Rowlandson over the course of her narrative. She never ceases to look toward the Puritan settlements as "home," and the very thought of going "homeward. . .much cheared [her] Spirit" (86). Yet the concept of home which at the outset proves to be so central and essential to Rowlandson's view of herself becomes as mutable as her own sense of identity. Almost immediately after identifying the Puritan settlements as "home," she relates the following story:

> Towards night I gathered me some sticks for my own comfort, that I might not lye a Cold; but when we came to lye down, they bade me go out and lye somewhere else, for they had company (they said) come in more than their own; I told them I could not tell where to go, they bade me go look; I

> told them, if I went to another *Wigwam* they would be angry, and send me home again. (86-87)

If home, as Lisa Logan suggests, is "where the self is clearly distinguished from the other," as are the "borders between right and wrong, good and evil," and if the work of Rowlandson's narrative is to "reestablish a social, ideological, and discursive 'home' for her" (Logan 257-58), then Rowlandson clearly oscillates between two homes and two cultures here.

In fact, Rowlandson's observations break down the barriers not only between the two cultures but also between classes when she describes "Wettimore" (Weetamoo), her Mistress, at her toilet: "A severe and proud Dame she was; bestowing every day in dressing herself near as much time as any of the Gentry of the land; powdering her hair and painting her face, going with her Neck-laces, with Jewels in her ears, and bracelets upon her hands . . . " (53). Dietrich comments that Rowlandson's refusal to mention her own appearance, especially when she gives such detailed ones of Wettimore,

> allows readers to concoct their own portrait of a filthy, smelly, dishevelled Rowlandson standing in vivid contrast to Weetamoo with her Kersey Coat, girdles of wampum, bejewelled ears, red stockings, and powdered hair. Rather than suggesting that Wettimore is a painted barbarian, Rowlandson likens her not only to the English, but to the English of a higher class than Rowlandson was herself.[24]

Again, Rowlandson twists the colonial stereotype: the neat and tidy Indian stands beside "the bedraggled, slovenly Puritan" (434). By addressing her captors as "Master" and

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[24] There is, however, some ambivalence or even condemnation in this reference. As a Puritan, Rowlandson would have had little use for the aristocracy, whose close affiliation with the Church of England excluded them from the ranks of the elect. At the same time, however, the author of the "Preface to the Reader" refers to Rowlandson consistently as a "gentlewoman."

"Mistress," Rowlandson also expands the English social stratification to include at least these two Indians. In so doing, she suggests that they have an obligation to her, in her mind, just as Masters and Mistresses in the Puritan community had to their servants. It seems as though at least to some extent this obligation was fulfilled, especially on the part of her Master who, when she is reunited with him after his long absence, himself provides her with water to wash herself.

Her master also provides her with a mirror, and although she comments that she did look into it to "see how [she] lookt" (96), she does not comment at all on what she sees there. Ann Stanford suggests that "she must have seen herself, both literally and symbolically, at the very depths of her degradation" (34). However, the symbolism of the event also shows her ability to slip in between cultures, and there is no indication that Rowlandson felt degraded by what she saw. Her very silence on the subject speaks volumes. The giver of the mirror, and thus the source of her reflection, is an Indian, and it is within his culture and by his kindness that she sees herself reflected. Furthermore, her silence concerning her own difference from her captors, having been given the opportunity to express it here, contrasts strangely with her assertion of the differences in "looks" between Christians and "*Heathens*" at the end of the previous remove. The conflict resulting from being in a state that should, for Rowlandson, have been "the very depths of her degradation" and her silent refusal to concede that it was, plays out in the ways that the narrative itself resists its own closure.

IV. Coming Home

Oddly, as Rowlandson comes closer and closer to redemption, her record of her participation in and identification with the culture of her captors becomes more and more seamless. She clearly occupies a position in the culture of her captors that far exceeds any she might have had in the Puritan community:

> When the Letter was come, the Saggamores met to consult about the Captives; and called me to them to enquire about how much my Husband would give to redeem me: When I came, I sate down among them, as I was wont to do, as their manner is: Then they bade me stand up, and said, they were in the *General Court*: They bid me speak what I thought he would give. (54)

First, Rowlandson is invited here to speak in a formal setting on her own behalf–a situation that rarely happened for a woman in Puritan New England.[25] Second, she sits among them, she says, "as I was wont to do, as their manner is." These small dependent clauses emphasize the closeness of her participation in and identification with the culture of her captors. It appears that this consultation, and her important role in it, are not uncommon occurrences. The event ranks as noteworthy not because it is in itself unusual, but rather because the content of the discussion furthers the progress of the narrative. Third, the close, even seamless connection of her "wont" (or accustomed behaviour) and their "manner" records her customary behaviour as in accordance with and their cultural practices.

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[25] Although Rowlandson's mother, Joan White, spoke publicly in church of her conversion experience, Neal Salisbury notes that this was an unusual privilege for New England women, particularly in the wake of the Anne Hutchinson affair (9). In fact, he notes that "around the time the Rowlandsons were married, a female church member, Mary Gates, was charged with 'making bold and unbeseeming speeches in the public assembly on the Lord's day'" (17).

Finally, Rowlandson is here asked to give an evaluation of herself. She is asked, simply, what she feels she is worth. Far from the wail of "All was gone," at the outset of her captivity, Rowlandson calmly and rationally, if in "a great strait," produces a figure. A substantial figure, £20 in fact, and although Lang quite rightly indicates that this figure is at least in part a result of her status as a minster's wife (18), Rowlandson herself makes absolutely no mention of that status here. In fact, the tone of her narrative navigates increasingly toward portraying herself as valuable because of this experience, rather than because of her social relationships previous to it. Several times she remarks upon the allegory her own capture represents to the situation of the Puritans in New England, and their falling away from the original mandate of the colony, but it is her experience, and here her identification with the culture of the Indians, which allow her to speak at all.

By the end of Rowlandson's captivity, even her original epithets for the Indians have become at least somewhat more moderate. Although they may still be "Heathen," and in her "few remarkable passages of providence" she still refers to them as "ravenous Wolves," some of the original metaphors have been modified. The "ravenous Beasts" have become "Bears bereft of their whelps," a much more sympathetic image, particularly considering Rowlandson's own bereavement. In addition, their "outrageous roaring and hooping" with its hellish associations has simply become a "dance" (103).

In contrast, Rowlandson's thoughts on "redemption" show some marked ambivalence, and characterize the boundaries of the Puritan settlement as more permeable, and Puritans' actions less distinctive, than perhaps they would be comfortable with. Although she remarks on the cruelty of the Indians throughout her narrative, the wording

she uses to describe the kindness shown her by various strangers in either culture is markedly similar. When a Squaw gives her food, shelter and a blanket, and even promises to "buy" (ironically, in a sense "rescue" or "redeem") her from an especially unpleasant situation, she remarks without the expected reference to God's grace or Providence that "these were strangers to me that I never saw before" (85). In another instance she receives refreshment from an Indian couple who were clearly instrumental in the destruction of an English settlement. However, even with this knowledge, again without direct reference to God's intervention, she not only states again with a sense of wonder that "they were strangers that I never saw before," she also comments that she sought and obtained their aid on several later occasions as well (101).

Later, back in the Puritan fold, she not only uses a similar phrase to describe those who helped her ("some of whom I knew, and others I knew not") she also makes the most astonishing direct comparison between her life during captivity and after redemption: "I was not before so much hemm'd in with the merciless and cruel *Heathen*, but now as much with pitiful, tender-hearted, and compassionate *Christians*" (108). Rowlandson goes on to explain that those who "hem" her in are acting out of the utmost charity, for which she offers up much thanks, but the undeniable association she draws between their stifling concern and her captive situation with the Indians shows equally her firm identification with both cultures and a profound, if muted, note of regret. Her peculiar use of the verb "hemmed" indicates that she is not, as she would have liked to be, "free," but rather confined within a different set of boundaries.

Rowlandson's discomfort with her position upon her return "home" shows most

clearly in one of the most frequently explored sections from her text. Very near the end of the narrative, she speaks of remembering "when I used to sleep quietly without workings in my thoughts, whole nights together; but now it is otherwise with me" (111). Like Lot's wife, whom she mentions with some sympathy when in the midst of her captivity, she looks back to the "other day" when she was "in the midst of thousands of enemies." Although at one point she claims that now "we are fed with the finest of the Wheat," once again taking on the plural pronoun form, her voice inclusive of all her many voices, she also expresses ambivalence in her comfort.[26] Her very act of looking back while others are asleep suggests some regret, some loss since her arrival back in her sheepfold. Just as during her captivity she could not entirely banish the Puritan ties and relationships which formed her subjectivity prior to capture, now as she is returned to the confines of Puritan society she cannot entirely lose the relationships she formed in order to keep her self alive in the Indian camp.

Her plea to God as she ponders tells us yet more: "of the love and goodness of God towards us, make it true of me, what *David* said of himself, *Psal.* Vi.6, *I water my*

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[26] In some respects, Rowlandson's narrative, and the speaking subject which inhabits it, never truly return to Puritan society. Salisbury points out that according to the internal dating of the text, Rowlandson was writing after she and her family left Boston, in which case she was living with a fair degree of comfort. However, even in the final paragraph of her narrative, she hearkens back to "[w]hen I lived in prosperity." She is clearly speaking of her pre-captive days, but she uses the marker of prosperity rather than captivity. The de-privileging of the fundamental dichotomy of captive/free upon which the text is based suggests that her current state is less than completely free. Perhaps even more importantly, because this temporal marker does not refer in any way to her *current* prosperity, or to any post-captivity period, it suggests no differentiation from the period of famine that *was* her captivity. This in turn suggests that in some way, or to some extent, this period never ended.

couch with my tears" (111). If this is her plea, then surely there is guilt here for not feeling sufficiently grateful for the mercy of God in showing her the way home.[27] Finding the freedom to move, to speak, and to become more than a placeholder, more than a dependent clause merely modifying a speaker and his right to speak, leads her to a lament far more bitter than even "all is gone." For now, after all she has suffered, even though she is allowed to record (and thus, to some extent, relive) her movement and her speech in this narrative, she must finally ask for help to once again "*Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord*" (112).

Breitweiser asserts that Rowlandson is at the "very centre" of meaning in this narrative. While this is true, any attempt to identify a stable, singular centre is, to a large extent, futile. As Rowlandson finds herself outside of or unable to contact the points of reference that have heretofore defined her, she begins a process of redefining herself. However, as she continues in captivity, her movements in the wilderness serve to "remove" these reference points, and she finds herself sliding and slipping between cultures, abandoning and picking up each as she feels it necessary, illuminating and expanding the possibilities of relational subject development. In the process, she shows the permeability both of the boundaries of these cultures and of the boundaries of the subject position which she continues to construct. Her ability to speak, then, becomes contingent upon her ability to move with these points of reference, to find new ones, and to envelop them all in her own speaking position. Her inability or perhaps refusal to return completely

[27] Derounian describes this passage as indicative of "survivor guilt."

to the community she left suggests that perhaps, as Teresa Toulouse suggests, "the community to which she wished to return, and upon whose stabilizing evaluative strategies she had relied, was not in fact so separate, nor ever had been, from the destabilizing factors she herself confronted in the wilderness" (Toulouse 669).

Rowlandson's refusal to remain simply the mouthpiece of the church, even after she is returned to her husband, together with her extreme experience, allow her to break cultural taboos, and give her the freedom to speak in and with her own tongue. Her very discomfort with her return and the ambivalent language she uses to describe her life in the Puritan community are ample evidence of the difficulty (or even the impossibility) of readjusting completely to her former role. Deitreich notes that Rowlandson's strategy, and the way in which she both conforms with and rejects her own "redemption," comes through writing: "once ransomed, she does not return to her position as the silent minister's wife. Instead, she reconstructs her own metaphorizing reading of her experience through her writing" (431).[28] The concept of the metaphor, which brings together often apparently unlike things to create a unit whose parts remain individual, although joined, serves as a metaphor for the kind of subjectivity Rowlandson creates for herself. If, as Logan suggests, "[t]he work of Rowlandson's text is to reestablish a social, ideological, and discursive 'home' for her" (258), then we find that she is at home everywhere, and nowhere.

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[28] Dietrich goes on to speculate that "perhaps [Rowlandson's] participation in an oral culture–where the ability to 'tell the story' conferred individual and tribal identity–intricately connects to her need to relate her experience" (434). It may also constitute another example of the blending of subject positions Rowlandson accomplishes.

The incredible popularity of Mary Rowlandson's narrative on both sides of the Atlantic suggests a cultural climate which, for many reasons, was sympathetic toward and sensitive to the issues the narrative raises. Even before Rowlandson's text went into print, the rumors and reports of Indian captives, which dated back a century to Captain Smith's encounters, as well as to the mysterious disappearance of the Roanoke colony, had broadcast the danger of the American experience and the threat of miscegenation inherent to life there. Equally importantly, the large print runs (for the time) and extensive distribution of the text, combined with the drive toward allegory it contains, set up the trope of captivity as an accessible and acceptable metaphor of incredible power and versatility.

The internal contradictions which shape Rowlandson's report of her experience, particularly since it was written in hindsight, show the flexibility of the genre and its ability to sanctify transgressive behaviors while appearing to adhere to conservative social practices and ideological norms. This leads directly to the paradoxical potential of the captivity narrative to function as "escape" literature; it not only allows but compels freedom of movement–both physical and cultural–and the removal from familiar (often restrictive) cultural settings. The circumstances of this removal affirm cultural authority by having authoritative figures enact (or fail to prevent) the removal while concurrently undermining that same authority by describing the act of abduction or the failure to prevent it as morally reprehensible, thus placing the captive in a morally superior position from which she can challenge "the Word" while remaining central to it.

The power of the captivity narrative when translated into a fictional context is that

it allows the subject to exploit the subversive power of an enforced flexibility created by enforced freedom of movement. The fictional narrative allows the reconfiguration of (often feminine) subjectivity by appearing to force this reconfiguration through circumstance, while offering the (often female) author the promise of complete control over the new environment whose influences will shape the subject's reconfiguration. Thus the appeal of the trope of captivity to women authors in particular is twofold. On the one hand it allows the symbolic recreation of the cultural restrictions placed on women, permitting the expression of frustration to which these restrictions give rise. On the other, it empowers the author to transcend these limitations by enabling the transportation of her character to a setting which renders the restrictions irrelevant and inoperative–a kind of utopia.

Margaret Cavendish: The Self Begotten

As *Incorporeal Spirits* the *Fancy* faines,
Yet *Fancy* cannot be without some *Braines*.
—Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies* 1653, 43.

Margaret Cavendish certainly never experienced captivity the way Mary Rowlandson did. Born a member of England's landed gentry, she became the second wife of William Cavendish, then Marquis and later Duke of Newcastle, and her doting and much older husband indulged his wife's passion for writing and publishing to an unusual degree. Even though she and William were royalists, and as such lived in exile (and on credit) for the duration of the interregnum, Margaret occupied a position of privilege throughout her life that Mary Rowlandson could not have imagined. Margaret herself comments on her privileged station in her autobiography: "As for my breeding, it was according to my Birth, and the Nature of my Sex, for my Birth was not lost in my breeding, for as my Sisters was or had been bred, so was I in Plenty, or rather with superfluity" (41). However, on levels not as obvious as those of Rowlandson's experience, Cavendish did consider herself a captive. She felt strongly the restrictions placed on her by the gender roles assigned even to upper class women in England, particularly where they touched education and the discourse of Natural Philosophy. Her exclusion from membership in the Royal Society, even though she was allowed to visit one of their meetings, emphasizes the masculine nature of the budding discourse of science.

Cavendish resisted this exclusion energetically, and her status and wealth allowed her not only to write but to publish some fourteen weighty tomes between 1652 and her death in 1673. However, her gender, along with her reclusive nature, resulted in her

writing in relative isolation. The project of this chapter is first to look at the cultural and literary circumstances which necessitated the kind of writing and subject positions Margaret Cavendish espouses in *The Blazing World*, and then to explore how she uses the trope of the captivity narrative, linked to an imaginary voyage of discovery and apocalyptic utopian visions, to create a space where the flexibility of a composite, "chimeric" subjectivity is embraced rather than rejected: she becomes a native, rather than a denizen.

To accomplish this, in *The Blazing World* Cavendish develops a fascinating rhetorical strategy which seems to stem from the defiant position that, if no one will enter into a dialogue with her, she will talk to herself. She does this by creating in her text a whole group of characters who are more or less transparently Margaret Cavendish, and then has them engage in dialogue with each other. The problems associated with the strategies Cavendish uses, and her intriguing response to them, are best understood if preceded by an explanation of the restrictions she faced in her culture and how they shaped the development of subjectivity in her writing.

I. The Realm of "Phantasie" and the Empress's New Clothes

If, as Kate Lilley suggests, "[a]ll utopias are necessarily works of theory, of criticism, and of speculative fiction" (Lilley 1992: 103), then one question which presents itself concerning *The Blazing World* is why, for the purposes of theory, criticism, and speculative fiction, Cavendish found it necessary to use the trope of the captivity narrative

not once but twice: not only is the "Lady" abducted from the shores of her native land, but the spirit of the "Duchess of Newcastle" is subsequently commandeered by this Lady, now an Empress, and put to work as a scribe. This question of genre choice is answered by the fact, illustrated in Rowlandson's experience, that a sudden removal to completely unfamiliar circumstances where both cultural and physical landmarks are gone necessitates a complete rebuilding and reinterpretation of identity.[29] If the social landmarks that locate and guide the construction of a woman's subjectivity also deny the resulting subject the right to speak, then clearly in order to speak the location and landmarks must be changed, and the subject refashioned. If these same social landmarks deny women the authority to move their own bodies to another location, or indeed, if another location does not exist or is not within reach, then abduction and the resulting captivity–real or imagined–would appear to be the only answer; the captors, being male, can pass for authorizing forces, while preserving purity of motivation for the "ladies" thus captured by being entirely responsible for their movement.[30] In *The Blazing World* the abduction of the "Lady" clears

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[29] Earla Wilputte notes that in women's imaginary voyages, including Cavendish's *Blazing World*, women can rectify the problems of circumscription of their voices in the "real" world by creating an "equal playing ground by displacing everyone onto unfamiliar territory, distancing the readers from the new world's inhabitants through the process of 'othering' so that the readers–male and female–are united in their confrontation with these 'others'" (Wilputte 110). She also notes that "[t]he imaginary voyage allows Cavendish the platform to speak and act authoritatively and to precipitate immediate change. Her female protagonists, like other women's imaginary voyaging heroines, are displaced into a foreign environment where their prescribed social behavior is unknown to the natives and can therefore be abandoned and a new identity explored and realized" (Wilputte 116-117).

[30] "Imaginary voyages," Wilputte remarks, "could be prescriptive works when directed at women; however, when they are written by women–and it is a genre which attracted few women authors perhaps because . . . it was as immodest to travel in the mind as in the body–they are quests to discover feminine individuality and discourse" (Wilputte

the canvas and allows Margaret Cavendish to create herself anew through her characters. As Mendelson and Bowerbank note in their introduction to *Paper Bodies*, "[i]n the process of writing, Margaret Cavendish fashioned a personal identity, indeed an entire universe, radically different from the world in which she lived" (9).

Although the exile from community–both physical[31] and intellectual–which Cavendish experienced might seem the very antithesis of Rowlandson's captivity, particularly given the differences in class and religious beliefs which separate the two women, in fact the two events allow the women to experience similar influences on the creation of their subjectivity. Both captivity and exile require a reconstruction of the self based on criteria very different than those of the society normally inhabited, and both involve an isolation from that same society. These factors combine to create a subjectivity characterized by an unusual flexibility, a flexibility that comes to Cavendish quite naturally from her social and cultural situation, as Mendelson and Bowerbank remark:

> The writings of Margaret Cavendish are remarkable for their vivid depiction of the mores and mentality of seventeenth-century England. Yet paradoxically, she was probably unique for her time in the extent to which she herself transcended the rigid categories of gender and class that defined most people's lives. The paradox begins to recede when we realize that her

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109). As Lilley points out, in *The Blazing World* the genre of the imaginary voyage is linked to a plot of abduction and sexual assault. Instead of cross-dressing or masking, female freedom in this text is granted through various strategies of disembodiment and spectacular self-presentation" (Lilley 1994: xxiii). Thus the physical captivity results in intellectual and spiritual freedom. Biographically, this links to Cavendish's own life, as her "captivity" in marriage led to her elevated status, and thus the privilege to do as she liked.

[31] Cavendish was an ardent royalist, and a lady-in-waiting to Queen Henrietta Maria. Her husband William Cavendish was one of the most notorious leaders of the royalist forces. They met and married in exile, and lived abroad for the duration of the interregnum.

> works illuminate the most significant preoccupations of her society precisely because she played with, probed, ridiculed or rejected the dominant assumptions that structured early modern beliefs and behaviour. (9)

When Cavendish writes, over and over, of captivity,[32] she allegorizes the restrictions placed on her own thoughts and expression by societal expectations based on gender roles. In her preface to *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* (which she published in the same volume as *The Blazing World)*, Cavendish remarks that "Our Sex . . . is not suffered to be instructed in Schools and universities," so that "many of our Sex may have as much wit, and be capable of Learning as well as men; but since they want Instructions, it is not possible they should attain to it" (qtd. in Rogers 182). Of primary importance here is the reason Cavendish identifies as the cause of women's apparent lack of reason or intellect; their "wit," which functions in a parallel way to fancy,[33] is ungoverned by the moderating force of reason (or judgement) which a proper education would develop. John Rogers interprets Cavendish's assertion about the education of women to mean that "it is, more specifically, the compulsory confinement of female movement and action to the home that constitutes the primary impediment to women's intellectual progress" (182).

Thus it is difficult to fully separate the subjectivity created in the text from these

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[32] In *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity*, for example, the shipwreck motif is repeated, and the virtuous young lady stranded in the Land of Sensuality is held captive first by a bawd, then by a prince. She shoots the Prince when he tries to seduce her, and spends most of the rest of the text cross-dressed and escaping from him.

[33] Paul Stevens points out that in Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, the functions that Locke attributes to wit and judgement, Milton's Adam attributes respectively to fancy and reason in *Paradise Lost* (Stevens 1985: 14).

social conditions which influenced the text's creation. When Lilley remarks that "Margaret Cavendish campaigned for the restoration of what had been taken from her and hers, as Royalists, and for the supply of what, as a woman, had never been available to her" (Lilley 1994: xv), she touches again on the reason for the necessity of the captivity narrative genre to Cavendish's *The Blazing World.* The world in which the Lady lives, like the world in which Cavendish herself lived, is lacking in some way. The Lady's world lacks the riches of the *Blazing World*, while Cavendish's world lacks the social systems which would allow her the "dilettante" status men of her class could attain.

Mendelson and Bowerbank note that "[u]ntil recently, the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century was seen as the collective achievement of certain European men, who created research institutions in order to advance man's knowledge and empire over nature. The scientific pursuits of early modern European women were, for the most part, forgotten or undervalued as the leisured activities of a few well-placed 'scientific ladies'" (23). Particularly within the discourse of Natural Philosophy, the exclusion of women was almost absolute. And certainly it was this discourse in which Cavendish wanted so desperately to be included. As a woman, however, and a suffocatingly bashful one at that,[34] any comments she could have braced herself to make would have been ignored or

[34] Speaking of her time in the court of Henrietta-Maria, Cavendish admits, "I was so bashfull when I was out of my Mothers, Brothers, and Sisters sight . . . that when I was gone from them I was like one that had no foundation to stand, or Guide to direct me, which made me afraid, list I should wander with Ignorance out of the waies of Honour, so that I knew not how to behave my self. Besides, I had heard the world was so apt to lay aspersions on even the innocent, for which I durst not look up with my eyes, nor speak, nor be in any way sociable" (*An Account* 46). See also *Sociable Letters* CXXXVII for what Mendelson and Bowerbank call "a poignant account of the disruptive effects of bashfulness" (13).

ridiculed. Samuel Pepys' diary amply illustrates this when recounting her famous visit to the Royal Society: "The Duchess hath been a good, comely woman; but her dress is so antik, and her deportment so ordinary, that I did not like her at all, nor did I hear her say any thing that was worth hearing, but that she was full of admiration, all admiration" (152). The importance Pepys places on Cavendish's deportment and dress, and his like or dislike of them, seem to impact directly here not only on his opinion of her words but even on his ability to hear them.

Thus when Cavendish refers to her apparent militant lack of intertextuality, which Marilyn Williamson refers to as making "a virtue of her ignorance," she speaks of an exclusion that is forced upon her more than a condition which she has chosen, or which has resulted from a lack of understanding of the "arduous discipline needed for real achievement" (Williamson 38).[35] Furthermore, the allusions Cavendish makes within her work both to Sidney and to various other writers suggest that her proclaimed dependence on her own fancy alone is a ruse rather than a real condition.

It is as a result of this ruse that the text of *The Blazing World* reveals two separate, concurrent and apparently contradictory projects. One is to establish Cavendish as a harmless eccentric, thus deflecting criticism and rendering her work non-threatening to the authority of the nearly exclusively masculine discourse of Natural Philosophy. The other, deeper project, reveals an underlying desire to shake the very foundations not only of the

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[35] Here Williamson seems to fall prey to Cavendish's own pronouncements about her refusal to revise her work and her insistence on sending it straight from her pen to the publisher– pronouncements given the lie by James Fitzmaurice's astute assessment of her hand-written corrections.

discourse of Natural Philosophy, but of the nature and status of women as speakers in late seventeenth-century English society. With one set of references, actions, and narrative techniques, Cavendish seems to revel in her writing as a product of what Sidney, following Tasso's misinterpretation, calls the *Phantastike* imagination, and thus as a self-absorbed and utterly self-generated fantasy: a reflection of Cavendish's own desires with little relevance to anything outside her own mind. However, Cavendish seems to spend a great deal of time and energy encoding in her works evidence that they are in fact the project of an *Eikastike* imagination, that is, the imagination governed by reason and thus "figuring foorth good things" (Sidney 44).[36]

Thus in a wider sense what Cavendish attempts in *The Blazing World* is nearly as old as poetry itself, and has been described by philosophers from Aristotle to Sidney, whose famous phrase encapsulates the project by saying that the natural world is "brasen," while "the Poets only deliuer a golden" (Sidney 8). Sidney thus defends the products of the imagination, although he admits, "I will not denie but that mans wit may make Poesie, which should be *Eikastike*, which some learned haue defined, figuring foorth good things, to be *Phantastike*, which doth, contrariwise, infect the fancie with vnworthy objects" (Sidney 41). Paul Stevens's exegesis of these phrases both elaborates and clarifies Sidney's claims:

> . . . the nature that fancy creates, according to Sidney, is not really new, but the re-creation of an original nature, now lost: the images that fancy creates are in fact reflections of Ideas. When fancy is *Eikastike*, when it figures

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[36] For a thorough reading and explication of Sidney's description of the *Phantastike* and *Eikastike* imaginations, see Paul Stevens, *Imagination and the Presence of Shakespeare in Paradise Lost.*

> forth good things, its inventions are the consequence or imprint of Ideas. Fancy's new actuality is an imitation, not of the sensible world, but of the ideal. (48)

The *Phantastike* imagination, by contrast, Stevens explains as "fancy ungoverned by reason" (Steven 46), which produces not an image of an (often divinely and certainly rationally inspired) ideal but rather a mere reflection of the desires issuing from an overstimulated brain. *The Blazing World*, whose title seems meant to call to mind Sidney's golden one,[37] certainly attempts to illustrate how far the "brazen" world has departed from the ideal.

The strategies necessary to maintain the icastic within the guise of the fantastic affect both the life of the author and the lives of her books after publication. James Fitzmaurice, in his 1991 article "Margaret Cavendish on Her Own Writing: Evidence from Revision and Handmade Correction," notes a marked distinction between the persona that Cavendish presented to the world, and the actual relationship between herself and her texts. Both cases are extremely interesting in the context of the construction of a subjectivity that defines itself with relationship *to* itself. Fitzmaurice describes Cavendish's construction of her persona:

> Margaret Cavendish often liked to leave the impression that she wrote without revision, and she sometimes suggested that she cut herself off from her writing after she had given it to those who were to attend to its printing. In the process, she created a space between herself as rational woman and harmless eccentric. The harmless eccentric wrote quickly and sent unfinished material to the press. The rational woman shook her head and sighed at such foolishness. These and other inconsistencies of public personality have puzzled readers for the last three hundred years, but

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[37] The Blazing World is literally a golden one as well, as it has "larger extents of gold, than our Arabian sands" (133).

> during her life they offered Cavendish important protection as a woman writer. (Fitzmaurice 1991: 297)

The strategy must have worked at least to some extent, because as Fitzmaurice goes on to note, "[t]here is no record of any serious public attack by either a man or a woman on Cavendish although she was, of course, ridiculed in private by Pepys and others" (Fitzmaurice 1991: 202).

The reasons for Cavendish's construction of a *Phantastike* persona become even clearer in the context of Lord Denny's appraisal of Lady Mary Wroth. Fitzmaurice notes that "[f]or Lord Denny and a great many others, Wroth was a 'hermaphrodite in show, in deed a monster'" (Fitzmaurice 1991: 297). Upon reading her biography of her husband, Pepys judges Cavendish "a mad, conceited, ridiculous woman, and [her husband] an asse to suffer her to write what she writes to and of him" (194-95). But, as Fitzmaurice asserts elsewhere,

> although Cavendish liked to dress in eye-catching clothing of her own design, she was not simply a public fool: rather, she intended to be understood as a harmless eccentric so that she could protect herself from criticism. If she appeared to suffer from mental disturbances, then she could scarcely be attacked for the publication of what she wrote: and it was the printing of her work rather than the writing of it that was at issue. (Fitzmaurice 1990: 202)[38]

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[38] The very word "eccentric," often used to describe Cavendish even three hundred years after her death, suggests an interesting conception of subjectivity quite apart from the reasons why eccentricity would appear less threatening than rationality in a woman. The Greek roots of the word literally translate to "out of the centre," which gives both the suggestion of imbalance produced by the image of a wheel with its axis off-centre, and the suggestion of a lack of a fixed centre altogether. This second image in turn suggests a deliberate attempt by Cavendish to construct a persona which, without a single centre, itself contains the possibility of multiplicity, and thus the possibility of dialogue within the self.

Furthermore, "condemnation of a harmless eccentric would have seemed base" (Fitzmaurice 1991: 297-98).

The need for the product of an icastic imagination to be encased in the garb of ungoverned fancy suggests a reason for the use of the captivity narrative as a genre, since it provides an apparently *Phantastike* environment in which to discuss (or disguise) serious and potentially subversive topics. Simultaneously, the double purpose of the text explains the presence of a subjectivity that always appears in dialogue with itself. Despite or perhaps because of this apparently fractured nature, the subject(s) created in and by *The Blazing World* absolutely refuse to subside into silence. In fact, their garrulousness creates in the text what from time to time seems almost like chatter.

Paul Salzman calls the framing narrative of the text in which the initial abduction of the young Lady occurs a "swift embellishment of verisimilitude at the beginning of the tale, so essential for stories of this kind" (Salzman 295), but the implications of the structure of the framing narrative also place it firmly in the category of gender politics. When the merchant (who, it should be remembered, is beneath her in both "Birth and Wealth") captures the Lady to attempt his marriage-by-rape, Kate Lilley remarks that "he rapidly loses control of the boat's direction" (Lilley 1992: 122). In fact, he loses control of much more than this. The capture effected by the merchant actually enables a rewriting of culture at a fundamental level. It insinuates the voice of women into masculine conversation through authorizing the Lady's movement into a world which Cavendish creates as a cross between the American El Dorado and apocalyptic visions of the New Jerusalem in Revelations 21-22. In essence, the Lady's capture allows Cavendish to re-

envision the "New Heaven and New Earth" of biblical promise.

The Lady-become-Empress's own appearance quite literally embodies this connection to the visions in Revelations as the description of her echoes that of the "woman clothed with the sun,"and the connection between the newly-minted Empress and the Blazing World itself is inscribed for the reader on the Empress's body in the blazon which describes her. Not only does the term "blazon" link the woman and the world homophonically, the Empress's clothing literally blazes, and she with it:[39]

> Her accoutrement after she was made Empress, was as followeth: on her head she wore a cap of pearl, and a half-moon of diamonds just before it; on the top of her crown came spreading over a broad carbuncle, cut in the form of the sun; her coat was of pearl, mixed with blue diamonds, and fringed with red ones; her buskins and sandals were of green diamonds: in her left hand she held a buckler, to signify the defence of her dominions; which buckler was made of that sort of diamond as has several different colours; and being cut and made in the form of an arch, showed like a rainbow; in her right hand she carried a spear made of a white diamond, cut like the tail of a blazing star, which signified that she was ready to assault those that proved her enemies. (*Blazing World* 133)

This description, certainly a blazon of sorts since its nature and feminine subject seem to invoke the familiar Renaissance form, crosses itself both productively and subversively. Attention to clothing certainly tends to be represented as a feminine (or at least effeminate) trait, and yet in this description, not only is the clothing made of the hardest substance available (transfiguring the softness generally associated with femininity), it is distinctly martial in character. Rather than leaving the maternal sun-clad woman of

[39] This connection is repeated and strengthened in "Part II" of the *Blazing World* where the Empress is quite literally clothed with the sun; her garments are fashioned from "star-stones."

Revelations to be pursued by monsters,[40] Cavendish transforms her into a formidable and powerful figure. In fact, the whole episode teeters on the edge of the classical arming of the hero, rather than the deconstructive description of the idealized woman. Even the purpose of the description crosses this boundary; certainly there is the sense that the passage describes the Empress's beauty, but rather than cutting the body of the woman described into pieces, this passage builds her up, providing a shell of protection that could be used to "turtle" under, but won't be, given the significance of the spear and buckler which the blazoner/armorer carefully explains.

Cavendish's views on the nature and status of women are clearly, if allegorically, illustrated in the "Lady's" role in her home world, where she seems to suffer from exactly the same kinds of difficulties that Cavendish herself does. Her worth is valued incorrectly (particularly by her abductor), she has no outlet for her abilities, and her speech, if there is any, simply isn't heard. Her opinions about her life before and during her capture are never recorded. As Rachel Trubowitz points out, the discrepancy that Cavendish notes over and over again in her writing between the value of women and the credence given to their voices is played out again here:

> With her entry into the Blazing World, the distinctions between "inside" and "outside," under which she suffers in the old world that she leaves behind, no longer have currency. In her old world, the young Lady's inner excellence is not matched by her outward circumstances . . . By contrast, in the Blazing World, the inner excellence of the young Lady finds immediate veneration in the outside world, over which she is bequeathed absolute dominion. (Trubowitz 233)

In order to find herself valued, the Lady (and her author) must leave behind the world that

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[40] See Revelations 12.

does not know how to value her, viewing her (at least in the eyes of her abductor) as sexual and possibly financial property. In the world she enters/makes, her inner worth and outer recognition match; she belongs and has a place that is no longer simply chaste, silent and obedient. This new world allows for her own subjectivity and constitutes a place where it functions well, as opposed to a place that misrecognizes it entirely.

Mirroring her own life experience, Cavendish posits the world to which the Lady is moved as pre-existing, just as the textual world of Natural Philosophy into which she is attempting to write herself pre-exists her efforts, and then posits her own creative processes as retextualizing that world, allowing herself the status of independent creative subject rather than dependent created object. The circumstances surrounding the Lady's capture and forcible removal to this new world suggest not only the political subversiveness explored above, but also a rejection of the conceptualization of women as relative to men and dependent on them, by having the gods deliver her from an amplification of that kind of fate in the form of the marriage-by-rape her abductor plans.

In the Blazing World, the Lady's participation in the discourses of learning is unimpeded; here she need not make any overt appeal to masculine authority. Indeed, her abduction places that very authority in a dubious position first by placing it in the wrong by having it violate the decorum of a virtuous woman,[41] and then by making that authority

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[41] Of course, the fact that this capture would, in ordinary terms, severely compromise the honour and virtue of the "Young Lady" does give this part of the narrative the sense of a cautionary tale, and in some senses carries the taint of sexual misconduct into the freer world that the Lady ends up in (the mention of "seraglios," platonic or not, bear this out to some extent). It is interesting that the lady is labelled "virtuous," but is kept alive not by her virtue but rather by "the light of her beauty, the heat of her youth, and protection of the gods" Blazing World126).

responsible for both movement to and arrival in a setting where her speech and writing are not only acceptable but expected and encouraged. The Lady (now the Empress and thus able to wield authority over herself and over learned men and eventually, in "Part II," over politically powerful men), is allowed to exercise her creative imagination; she is also, by the use of her "spirit-sister," the "Duchess of Newcastle," able to record her thoughts and words.

The obvious lack of a "real" or functioning masculine authoritative presence in this entire narrative (the Emperor appears long enough to bestow authority on the Empress and promptly vanishes) has the effect of leaving Eve rather than Adam to name the world–and thus to create both the text and the conditions under which it is produced–and things turn out rather differently as a result. As Marilyn Williamson remarks, "through her writing [Cavendish] could control her relationship to the public world, in which readers meet her on terms that she creates. Those terms could be adjusted to her self instead of to the person the world would make of her. In such a predicament, writing becomes a means of creating a community with the reader so that one is not alone but dealing with another on one's own terms. . . . the reader . . .is simply presented not with a text but with Cavendish in the text" (Williamson 58-59). In fact, the reader is presented with several "Cavendishes" in this text, but the necessity of creating an inclusively and internally relational subjectivity, particularly when the author (or her narrative persona) is apparently an author of unregulated fancy, was a very isolating experience for Cavendish. She found that her writing alienated not only men, but also women, who viewed her literary

endeavours as at best affected and at worst completely insane.[42] The subject(s) produced in this circumstance, their ability to talk to themselves, and the potential problems associated with this form of speech, need to be explored next.

II. Satanic Solipsism and the *Phantastike* Imagination

When the "Duchess of Newcastle" in the narrative is explained to be "most industrious to make her own world, because she had none at present" (186-87), what is being expressed is made far more complex by the compound of character/author/narrator who expresses it. The Duchess as character has no world to rule at present, but the Duchess as author has no world at all. That is, the world she desires, the world of serious philosophical and scientific discourse, is barred to her. Thus when the Duchess (character) makes up a world out of her own mind, she is doing no more or less than the Duchess (author) does with not only this but other texts. That is, she creates her own terms, her own world, her own conversation; she creates a place where she is accepted and acceptable, no longer "a stranger in a known land and (from her own perspective) a well-known person in an alien society" (Ferguson 317).

[42] Dorothy Osborne quipped to her husband of Cavendish's *Poems and Fancies*, "there are many soberer people in Bedlam, i'le swear her friends are much to blame to let her go abroade." However, she also gushed, when she discovered Osborne had met Cavendish, that "I knew you could not chuse but like her, but yet let mee tell you you have not seen but the worst of her, her conversation has more charmes than can bee in meer beauty, and her humor & disposition would make a difform'd person appeare lovely" (41). This reinforces once again the reactions that publishing brought upon women who chose to write.

Gallagher argues that Cavendish seems to be claiming singularity and absolute monarchy over the self, and while, as she remarks, Cavendish's eccentricity exists "because she is outside of anyone else's circle" (Gallagher 26), this does not preclude Cavendish from constructing her own circle. And in fact, because the "circle" Cavendish constructs is so expansive, and so completely of her own mind (as the metaphorical building of worlds in *The Blazing World* suggests), it argues for a subjectivity that incorporates multitudes (or at least multiples) within its circumference.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of *The Blazing World* is this "triple" speaking subject, who is, by turns, the Empress, the soul of "Margaret Cavendish" as a character in the text, and the narrative persona of the author, Margaret Cavendish herself. The subtle shifting of the subject position and the elastic relationships between these subjects/characters force the reader to consider, and reconsider, from what exact position (if indeed it is possible to be exact about it) the text is narrated. Because of the active involvement of the narrator in the editing process and because the narrator and author also share a common name, the narrative persona carries the authoritative weight of authorship; however, the narrator is also clearly identified as a fictional character in her role as the Empress's scribe. The naming of the scribe after the author/narrator, and the self-description and self-identification of the author as the scribe, further connect the characters, as does the obvious fluidity and lack of boundaries between the Empress and her scribe. All this leads to a speaking subject who is not one but many.

The complex and composite nature of the subject(s) created in *The Blazing World* (and for whom the Blazing World was created) become clearer when the Empress

commandeers[43] the "Duchess of Newcastle's" soul. She greets the newly arrived Duchess by "embrac[ing] and salut[ing] her with a spiritual kiss" (181). This "spiritual kiss" that unites the characters both clarifies and complicates the relationship between them. The connection through the mouth, an organ long accepted as an opening through which the soul may pass, renders the physical origin of the Duchess's soul somewhat murky.[44] As the Empress is materially present and the Duchess is just as clearly incorporeal, the suggestion is that the two characters are parts of a whole, a suggestion confirmed by the fact that the author/narrative persona and the abducted soul share not only a name but a common occupation (writing, and in particular writing about the Empress and her Blazing World) and even a common biography.[45] These three composite parts come together and establish themselves by their relationships to and dialogues with each other. Although the resulting subject may appear both chimeric in its composition and solipsistic in its self-absorption, it posits a self which finds a possibility for speech deriving from its very composite and self-consciously constructed nature.

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[43] Although the strange relationship between the Empress and the Duchess is never directly referred to as an abduction or a captivity, certainly there is no evidence that the Duchess is ever requested to come to the Empress's presence. The Empress simply commands one of her "immaterial spirits," "Send me the Duchess of Newcastle's soul," and in the next sentence the task is already complete (*Blazing World* 181).

[44] Later in the narrative the mutable and interconnected nature of the spirits of these two women becomes even more interesting, as their spirits seem to leave and enter not only their own bodies, but each other's as well–and, at one point, both characters, in spiritual form, inhabit the body of Cavendish's husband in a kind of "platonic seraglio," at the same time acknowledging and undermining gender difference (*Blazing World* 190 ff).

[45] When the Empress and Duchess (and reader) visit the Duchess's world, the Duchess's life is found to mimic the "real" Duchess's life down to the last detail.

In fact, the architecture of the composite subject produced in *The Blazing World* bears a striking resemblance to the Trinitarian Christian God, a resemblance made more remarkable by the feminine gender of the components. The overseer and governor of all is, of course, the author, whose identity is inextricably entwined with that of the narrator, the "Duchess of Newcastle." With good reason the *Book of Common Prayer* refers to God as "the author and giver of all good things," for with authorship comes "utter" authority, which within the confines of this text Cavendish wields. The characters of the Duchess of Newcastle and the Empress complete the trinity, serving both as the divine offspring of the author and, inevitably, as inspirations and guides for each other. This complex trinity is further entangled by the endless, almost untraceable and certainly perpetual transience and mobility of the narrator, the Empress, and the Duchess within these positions. The identical names and life circumstances of the author/narrator and the scribe/Duchess, as well as their identical occupations (writing, and specifically writing this account) make them almost indistinguishable from each other.[46] The fact that Cavendish dictated most of her writings[47] and spoke openly about her desire to create and rule a world also entangles Cavendish the author with the character of the Empress (and then of the Duchess as well). The result is a subject "self-begot, self-raised / By [its] own quickening power" (*Paradise*

[46] They are, however, distinct. The narrative persona refers to herself in the first person (ie. p. 131) although very infrequently, whereas the Duchess in the narrative is clearly an active third-person character.

[47] A common and almost certainly apocryphal account has her waking at all hours of the night and summoning her secretary by calling out "John, I conceive!" –a tale obviously meant to once again link publication and promiscuity where women are concerned.

Lost 5. 860-61).

The subject thus created does not lack coherence: its boundaries are determined quite strictly by the text. It does, however, seem to attempt to resist defining itself in splendid isolation by producing an almost post-modern subject, self-reflexive and endlessly playful in its refusal of unity. And yet the lack of unity here does not lead to disintegration. Rather, the subject's "hybrid vigour" seems to allow the "Lady" to fully integrate with another culture without "going native"–an integration facilitated by the characteristics of the Blazing World and its inhabitants.

The textual world Cavendish creates in her utopian "Paradise" comprises a population of monsters all of which are composed of fragments from other recognizable creatures. These chimaera-like creatures both mirror the composite subject position produced by the text and create a world in which this sort of composite seems natural. When she first arrives, the "Lady" is met by "strange creatures, in shape like bears, only they went upright as men" (*Blazing World* 127); when their climate proves inhospitable to her she is taken to "another island of a warmer temper; in which were men like foxes, only walking in an upright shape" (127), and then to "an island where there were men which had heads, beaks, and feathers like wild-geese, only they went in an upright shape, like the bear-men and the fox-men; their rumps they carried between their legs, their wings were of the same length with their bodies, and their tails of an indifferent size, trailing after them like a lady's garment" (128). The mixed natures of these curious natives is immediately apparent, and is only heightened by the strange description of the birds' tails. Certainly a detail like this would not be inserted unconsciously into the work of a woman whose

penchant for clothing and tendency toward cross-dressing was legendary. Not only do these native creatures transgress the boundaries of humanity to become mixed things, they also seem to blur the boundary between the genders, creating some confusion and certainly some interestingly mixed species.

Given the huge range of creatures who greet the Young Lady when her boat enters the Blazing World, and given that all of them are chimaera-like composites of one sort or another, the Lady herself might seem the only "pure" or unadulterated being in a nation of monstrous mixes. And yet even this does not stop her from marrying into the land she has found, apparently committing the questionable practice of miscegenation. However, if the composite nature of the Duchess/ Empress/ Narrator is taken into account, the Lady is not "pure" at all, but rather yet another kind or chimaera. This would certainly explain her comfort with miscegenation, as well as her quick and easy adjustment (so unlike the experience of Mary Rowlandson) to her new milieu. In fact, Cavendish's utopia, the place where the subjectivity she creates is most comfortable and finds its way to speech, is a place populated and ruled by mixed, multiple subjects, rather than by solitary isolated identities. Thus when Sherman suggests, "[o]ne might say that Cavendish . . .has founded a discourse not *of* the self, but of *herself*" (Sherman 202), certainly she is to some extent correct, and the result in *The Blazing World* is this complex composite subject which, as Sherman's comment suggests, appears dangerously close to collapsing into solipsism. Catherine Gallagher remarks that in Cavendish's writing "[e]ach individual, each book, becomes whole, true, distinct, a world unto itself, only by virtue of the authoritative metaphor of absolute monarchy. Hence, what at first appears to be an absolutism that

would merely lead to the subjection of all individuals except the monarch was actually for Cavendish the foundation for a subjectivity that would make its own absolute claims" (Gallagher 27).

Thus the danger of solipsism in Cavendish's utopian vision is immense, just as it is for Milton's Satan, and the possibility for total self-absorption raises the danger of Cavendish's work becoming, like Satan's Hell, a product of pure "*phantasie*." Gallagher remarks on Cavendish's "wilful eccentricity" and "proclamations of singularity" as well as her determination not to be a "secondary creature" or "a satellite," and especially her sense of Cavendish as a "self-centered orb." Cavendish herself proclaims that her mind "is become an absolute Monark, ruling alone," although what her mind rules is not a single country but rather her thoughts, "as a peaceable Common-wealth" (from *The World's Olio*, qtd. in Gallagher 27). The necessity of flexibility in the subject, and the need to adapt to the constraints imposed by society, become evident here as Gallagher points to the direct link to gender that Cavendish herself makes in the most famous section from her preface to *The Blazing World,* which illuminates the effects of a "feminization of the writing subject":

> I am . . . as Ambitious as ever any of my Sex was, is, or can be; which is the cause, That though I cannot be Henry the Fifth, or Charles the Second; yet, I will endeavour to be, Margaret the First: and, though I have neither Power, Time, nor Occasion, to be a great Conqueror, like Alexander, or Cesar; yet, rather than not be Mistress of a World, since Fortune and the Fates would give me none, I have made One of my own . . . thus believing, or, at least, hoping, that no Creature can, or will, Envy me for this World of mine. (*Blazing World* 124)

Gallagher notes that "[t]he desire for absolute power is circumscribed, qualified, according to this passage, by Cavendish's sex" (Gallagher 27). Although the subject thus created

may seem to capitulate to the "immemorial association with a private, sequestered place," this space does not exist within "the sphere of the family, nor the scene of domestic productivity, nor the space of erotic encounter." Rather, Cavendish "transforms" feminine privacy and seclusion into "absolute privacy, void of other bodies and empty even of other minds" (Gallagher 30).[48]

Although this transformation seems revolutionary, the absolute privacy of this image also gestures toward an apparently inevitable solipsism. Gallagher uses as an illustration the frontispiece to *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, which shows Cavendish sitting in a library empty of both books and bodies except for her own self. She has, the legend reads, "most visitants, when She has none," so that although she is "in no sense a relative creature," (Gallagher 30) she is multiple within herself. Gallagher goes on to establish the multiple nature of the feminine subject Cavendish constructs,[49] but labels the self-construction as rather a "self-fragmentation." Although Gallagher concedes that the "self is a world," and the proof of its self-sufficiency is that it can make a world in fiction, she points out that particularly in *The Blazing World*, there are

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[48] Cavendish also astutely recognizes and names the "envy" or fear that her imaginative productions have every possibility of producing in others.

[49] In explaining and expanding on the multiplicity of Cavendish's subjectivity, Gallagher remarks that

> [w]hen the representation of the whole is reiterated as a part of the whole, it unsettles the very identity it was intended to anchor. And the absolute monarch, of course, as representation of the whole functions in just the same way. This vision of subjectivity is clearly a splendid generator of texts, and, although it may dizzy the reader, it does not necessarily presage 'the death of the subject,' about which we have heard so much. (Gallagher 32-33)

> an infinity of worlds . . . arranged in two different dimensions. First, an infinite number of them, we are told, are strung together like beads on a chain. Joined at their poles, each turns on its own axis. The blazing world of the title is only one of these. Second, the text gives us another dimension of multiplication by imagining the infinite recessing of worlds within worlds. And these two directions of multiplication intersect. The most important world in the chain of worlds, the blazing world of the title, has an empress, seemingly a figure of the ambitious author's wish fulfilment, who rules absolutely. However, by recreating the self as a fantasy empress inside the world that is, according to the preface, inside herself, the text begins a process of infinite regression. The self is no longer coextensive with its microcosm, just as the blazing world is not coextensive with the microcosm of the text. Hence, frustration enters the fantasy. (Gallagher 31)

What Gallagher terms a regression leading to frustration[50] (which implies a failure) might also be interpreted as a flexibility allowing for at least a degree of success. Cavendish finds a way to define her subject position through relationships, internally rather than externally, in part by allowing herself the luxury of an unstable, productive, and composite subjectivity, and by demanding the same of her mental subjects. Still, the specter of solipsism looms.

Gallagher also notes that

> Cavendish's texts show that the infinitude of selfhood accompanies the birth of the subject. Specifically in this case, it is connected with the birth of the woman as subject. That which seems the undoing of the stability of the self is that which allows subjectivity to come into existence as an excessiveness of consciousness in relationship to all objects but especially in relationship to itself as object. (Gallagher 32-33)

Although this leads, Gallagher claims, to "complete political and social isolation," in this

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[50] Sherman, although she disagrees with Gallagher's theoretical explanation of Cavendish's subjectivity, also comments on what she sees as the "potential for infinite regress" present in Cavendish's work. However, although the potential seems to exist, the very text this potential is written into circumscribes to some extent this possibility in its infinite potential for reproduction and dissemination.

respect it certainly seems to do no more than reflect Cavendish's lived experience. Her social position, elevated and privileged as it was, seems designed to produce a solipsistic view of the world and the self in relation to it.

The peculiar solipsistic nature of the subject in *The Blazing World*, and its will to power, bring to mind Milton's Satan, and the parallels are too obvious to overlook. Published in 1666 and again in 1668, *The Blazing World* is almost exactly contemporary with Milton's 1667 epic. Rogers links Cavendish's *Blazing World* with Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and although he eschews "any undue historical significance lurking behind the temporal proximity of Margaret Cavendish's visit [to the Royal Society] and the publication of Milton's epic" (180), he does mention the possible–even probable–literary influence that these two writers had on each other, particularly Milton on Cavendish. There is every reason to expect that she, at least, read his work (180).

Paul Stevens makes a convincing argument for the first two books of *Paradise Lost*, which he calls "the Satanic epic," as "the great example of *Phantastike* poetry, the kind of poetry that is both the creation and creator of delusion, of fancy ungoverned by reason" (Stevens 1985: 83), and certainly the methods Satan and Cavendish use to create their worlds are remarkably similar. Even the diction they use strikes a similar note. Satan, cast into Hell, dismisses his circumstances as irrelevant to his actual state; his mind, he claims, is "not to be chang'd by Place or Time" but rather "is its own place, and in it self / Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n" (1. 253-55). This, although a grand sentiment, is unquestionably a delusion. Cavendish's response to what, for her, is a material and not an allegorical situation, is equally defiant (and equally philosophical).

Recall her words in her "Preface to the Reader":

> I am not covetous, but as ambitious as ever any of my sex was, is, or can be; which makes, that though I cannot by *Henry* the Fifth, or *Charles* the Second, yet I endeavour to be *Margaret* the *First*; and although I have neither power, time, nor occasion to conquer the world as *Alexander* and *Caesar* did; yet rather than not to be mistress of one, since Fortune and the Fates would give me none, I have made a world of my own . . . (124)

The absolutely internal nature of both Satan's and Cavendish's worlds speaks both to the ambition (or arrogance) of their characters and to the exclusively self-referential nature of the worlds themselves. Not only does Cavendish match Milton's anti-hero in ambition,[51] but the world of the mind she fashions, and the resulting subject(s) seem as solipsistic and circular as the one Milton satirizes in his treatment of Satan. Thus what Cavendish produces in *The Blazing World* seems to issue from a purely *Phantastike* imagination. Linked as women were with a distinct lack of reason, Cavendish probably did not need to work as hard as she did to convince her readership that she was infected by nothing more than ungoverned fancy (although this view was made more believable by her "antic" dress and manners). But although her "*Phantastike*" writings were potentially able to "infect the fancie with vnworthy objects," Pepys's dismissive assessment of her visit to the Royal Society suggests that Cavendish was considered harmless if not taken seriously.

But Cavendish *did* want to be taken seriously. Her outspoken claims to this effect, however, did little more than reinforce the widely held opinion that she was mad. More convincing are the subtle machinations through which she demonstrates that indeed her

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[51] This is even more clearly the case in "Part II" of the narrative, where the Empress uses her power to destroy entire cities in order to impose a particularly government on her home world.

fancy is linked indisputably to reason and concerned with matters outside of her own desires, thus claiming her text as the product of an icastic imagination instead.[52] Perhaps most importantly, unlike Satan, Cavendish recognizes her own fancy *as* fancy. She never, as Satan does, "mistake[s] [her] own fancy for objective reality" (Stevens 1985: 101). The realization that her utopian fantasy *is* a fantasy marks one of the crucial differences distinguishing Cavendish's self-constructions from Satan's–a distinction that makes it possible to argue that she sidesteps Satan's solipsistic selfhood and thus creates a utopia that is not simply a fantastic reflection of her own arrogant desires but an icastic hypothetical realm where her own voice might be taken seriously. Although Samuel Pepys and other have been absolutely unable to concede that her writings are anything more than the "*Phantastike*" prattlings of an overindulged and possibly lunatic woman, the fact is that writers–particularly women writers–tend to find something substantial in the utopian vision of a world where a woman can wield ultimate power and authority.

III. Self-sufficient Female Atoms and Cavendish's Icastic Imagination

Not only Cavendish's but every utopia raises the question of whether the social and political structure envisioned is pure fancy from the human mind, or whether the impetus for the re-envisioning of culture issues from a divine source–and thus proposes an

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[52] This actually forms a trend and a theme through much of Cavendish's writing. In her poem, "It is hard to believe, that there are other VVorlds in this VVorld," she expresses the need for fancy by asserting that "*Senses* grosse do back our *Reason* hold." Equally importantly, she links this fancy directly to reason, as the epigraph to this chapter illustrates.

ideal toward which we ought to aspire. Part of the evaluation of whether *The Blazing World* fits the *Phantastike* or *Eikastike* models thus described must come from examining the work in the context both of its own history after publication and of the rest of Cavendish's *oeuvre*. In the process of world-building in *The Blazing World*, the flexibility inherent in the relationship between the subject(s) being imagined and their counterpart in the "real world" (who by virtue of her shared identity with the scribe is always intrusively present), is analogous to the flexibility of Rowlandson's subjectivity in its ability to enable contact between different cultures by participating in both at once.[53] As Sherman remarks, "[t]he self . . . in Cavendish's oeuvre is always Margarct Cavendish" (Sherman 188).

Cavendish's two projects–of projecting a *Phantastike* persona while producing an *Eikastike* text–not only allow discourse within the text but also, through the process of disguise examined earlier in this paper, between the text and the world into which it is published. Fitzmaurice remarks that "[r]ather than sending her manuscripts to the press with the parting thought 'go little book', Cavendish on some occasions continued to intercede with her writing after it became piles of printed sheets" (Fitzmaurice 1991: 299). This intercession is actually suggestive of a conversation, particularly since the corrections that Cavendish's books contain appear to be in her own hand, and occur after printing, before the books were apparently presented as gifts (Fitzmaurice 1991: 299-300). This visible conversation she conducts with herself (particularly since one of the three books

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[53] Although in the *Blazing World* Cavendish does not, as Rowlandson does, float freely from pronoun to pronoun, in many of her other works she does. However, rather than floating between "I" and "we," she confuses or conflates "he" and "she," as Marina Leslie points out (Leslie 189).

given careful attention when thus corrected is a volume of letters written by imaginary female correspondents) gives the position Cavendish tends to speak from a decided and dialogic multiplicity, with the woman of reason in eternal conversation (and possibly disagreement) with the woman of fancy.[54] In addition, they allow the intervening influence of the rational woman (in Cavendish a less obvious persona) and the rational writer on the text, which in and of itself argues for an icastic imaginative production.

Just as importantly, not only does Cavendish publish *The Blazing World* together with her non-fictional treatise *Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy* in 1666 and again in 1668, she both embeds the discourse of Natural Philosophy within the text and uses a preface and an "Epilogue to the Reader" to frame her fancy with reason.[55] Both these framing pieces clearly claim the governing force of her "fantastical" work to be reason. In the introductory "Address to the Reader" she intones:

> but mistake me not, when I distinguish *fancy* from *reason*; I mean not as if fancy were not made by rational parts of matter; but by *reason* I understand a rational search and enquiry into the causes of natural effects; and by *fancy* a voluntary creation or production of the mind, both being effects, or rather actions of the rational parts of matter; of which, as that is a more profitable and useful study than this, so it is also more laborious and

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[54] In fact, Fitzmaurice argues that "evidence from handmade correction suggests that Cavendish felt her best book for aristocratic audiences was *Sociable Letters*" (Fitzmaurice 1991: 307).

[55] When the Duchess, accompanied by the Empress, goes in spirit form to visit the "Duke of Newcastle," the souls of both women end up entering the Duke's body in a kind of "platonic seraglio." The Empress's and Duke's souls become "enamoured of each other; which the Duchess's soul perceiving, grew jealous at first, but then considering that no adultery could be committed amongst Platonic lovers, and that Platonism was divine, as being derived from divine Plato, cast forth of her mind that Idea of jealousy" (194-95). The very reference to Plato and Platonism here introduces the source of theories on the "icastic," since it pertains specifically to ideal forms.

> difficult, and requires sometimes the help of fancy, to recreate the mind, and withdraw it from its more serious contemplations. (124)[56]

In her "Epilogue," Cavendish defends herself again, claiming not only that her creation is "composed of the most pure, that is, the rational parts of matter" but that it is superior to the material world because in creating an empire to rule she has not "made such disturbances, and caused so many dissolutions of particulars, otherwise named deaths" as Alexander and Caesar did (224).

But this still leaves the question of how such a subjectivity as the one represented by the Empress, Duchess and narrator can hope to avoid solipsism. Even though dialogue is possible between the characters, the fact that they all seem to be Margaret Cavendish is certainly suggestive of a conversation doomed to solipsism. But as Rachel Trubowitz points out, "[t]rue community is represented by Cavendish as the intimate bond between self-sufficient female atoms" (Trubowitz 240). The key here is in "self-sufficiency." Although the communal relationship between author/narrator, Empress, and Duchess, is distinct from binarism, even the binarism of "right and wrong" which causes such conflict amongst the Empress's natural philosophers, and even though the Empress and Duchess are generally able to reach a consensus, and are quite open to each other's advice, they not infrequently disagree.

For example, immediately upon being brought before the Empress, the Duchess begins to argue about her own qualifications as a scribe, and the wisdom of the Empress's using her, since her handwriting is so bad that a reader would have to be specially trained

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[56] Here Cavendish is clearly echoing Sidney's assertion that poetry's end is "to teach and delight" (10), which Sidney himself borrows from Horace's *Ars Poetica*.

to understand her "characters; for they are rather like characters, than well-formed letters" (*Blazing World* 181). More seriously, the Duchess and Empress quickly launch into a prolonged disagreement about what exactly should be written. The Empress expresses her desire to write "the Jew's Cabbala." The Duchess immediately protests that the spirit of one of the "chief rabbis or sages of the house of Levi" would be necessary, since "otherwise, your Majesty will be apt to mistake, and a thousand to one, will commit gross errors." When the Empress dismisses this worry by saying that she will be instructed by her immaterial spirits, the Duchess replies, "Alas . . . spirits are as ignorant as mortals in many cases" (*Blazing World* 182). Once the Empress takes the Duchess's advice and decides to invent her own cabbala the two characters immediately turn to a disagreement about what kind of cabbala the Empress should create. In the end the Empress takes the Duchess's advice and decides upon a "poetical or romancical" cabbala (183).

Perhaps the most interesting difference of opinion occurs at the very end of the narrative, as the Empress confides to the Duchess:

> after I had received an absolute power from the Emperor, [I] did somewhat alter the form of government from what I found it; but now perceiving that the world is not so quiet as it was at first, I am much troubled at it; especially there are such contentions and divisions between the worm-, bear-, and fly-men, the ape-men, the satyrs, the spider-men, and all others of such sorts, that I fear they'll break out into an open rebellion, and cause a great disorder and the ruin of the government. (201)

To this the Duchess replies, "I would advise your Majesty to dissolve all their societies; for 'tis better to be without their intelligences, than to have an unquiet and disorderly government" (202). Paul Salzman claims that "The societies of virtuosi are dissolved to restore peace and harmony, and the main point of this side of the work seems to be a

critique of formal and experimental approaches to natural philosophy" (Salzman 297). Certainly this is one of the points, but the problem the Empress finds with the virtuosi is that their intolerance for each others' opinions and their quest for dominance–for absolute knowledge–are so invasive, that the competition which ensues threatens to destabilize the government.

The tacit indictment in Cavendish's "Epilogue" of the destruction wrought by literally invasive quests (such as Alexander's and Caesar's) for rulership corresponds to Cavendish's position on the invasive discipline of scientific experimentation, with its declared goal of subduing and subordinating a usually feminized "Nature" to the exclusively masculine Natural Philosophy's superior knowledge and authority. As "she," the Empress in the *Blazing World*, discards modern philosophers in her search for a model upon which to build her own "immaterial world," perhaps her most important rejection is of Hobbes. When the Duchess says that his "'imaginary world' seems to her "like a company of wolves that worry sheep, or like so may dogs that hunt after hares," as Judith Gardiner notes, she stresses "the relentlessly competitive and predatory character of Hobbes's theory–a theory, she implies, that involves conflicts for domination between oppressors and victims." Cavendish "characterizes Hobbes's philosophy of rationalized masculine egotism as competitive and antagonistic in comparison to her own narcissistic philosophy of self-generated pleasure" (Gardiner 54). Instead, and in opposition to Bacon's declaration that "he means to enlist science to enter nature 'like a general who means to take possession,'" Trubowitz asserts that Cavendish confines her heroine's scientific interests to noninvasive speculation and reflection" (Trubowitz 235). Along with

feminizing nature, then, Cavendish feminizes knowledge of nature and even philosophy itself in her world, creating a place for conjecture, speculation and reflection–which take place through conversation–rather than the (masculine) issuing of presumably authoritative statements.[57]

Although Gardiner links the "self-generated pleasure" she observes in Cavendish to Freudian narcissism, the subjectivity Cavendish's text produces seems rather to evolve as a self-generated composite which, because of its inclusive relativism, needs no competitive aggression. The idea of narcissism suggests arrested development, and tends to be applied far too often to women writers (one recalls the story about Virginia Woolf having met Freud and received from him a narcissus). Indeed, given the depth and breadth of Cavendish's *oeuvre*, and particularly considering the emphasis on things being linked and enveloped within her texts, there seems to be a productivity which a barren practice such as narcissism would render impossible. The self-generation here, though it gives pleasure, is more important as a marker of a collective subject than as a marker of psychological immaturity.

Even so, the dissolution of the scientific societies in the Blazing World, effected by the Empress on the advice of the Duchess, seems to undo all the changes to government that she has made. Anna Battigelli links this retraction at the end of *Blazing World* to Cavendish's ultimate rejection of the kind of full-scale religious conversion practised by

[57] Bowerbank and Mendelson note in their introduction to *Paper Bodies* that "in the preface to *Female Orations*, Cavendish indicates that even the form of men's and women's orations is gendered: while the men speak in a series of authoritative statements, the women speak in conversations" (21).

the Empress at the outset of the narrative. Battigelli ties the Machiavellian conversion tactics the Empress uses to Queen Henrietta Maria's attempts (of which one was the building of a beautiful chapel) to convert England to Catholicism (Battigelli 80-81).[58] However, in her retraction speech it is clear that what the Empress retracts are her changes not to religious observance but rather to the "form of Government." There is no evidence of insurrection or discontent within the church itself; rather, this passage makes it quite clear that the contentions occur in the area of Natural Philosophy, so that what is revoked is not the religious reformation but the penetrative, invasive, dominating study of science carried out by experimental scientists. This seems a subtle acknowledgment of the status of (a usually feminized) Nature as both beyond the kind of intrusive and limiting study conducted by the Royal Society and beyond the ken of the virtuosi who practice it.[59]

The Empress's efforts at managing and changing governments are by no means limited to the Blazing World. The process by which the Empress puts down rebellion in her former world and the imperialistic drive which seems to motivate her efforts may be distasteful to twenty-first century readers and seem incompatible with the argument in favour of her rejection of invasive practices. However, there is a key difference in that

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[58] The Empress, in the building of a beautiful temple, uses a fantastic sort of science involving the staging of apparently supernatural events, in order to prevent her new converts from "grow[ing] weary, and desert[ing] the divine truth" (163).

[59] Rebecca Merrens asserts that "[b]y theorizing an Epicurean view of nature predicated on celebrating fluctuation and indeterminacy, Cavendish rejects the tenets of patriarchal domination and valorizes instead the very qualities which threaten and motivate patriarchal philosophers" (424), and suggests that the threat contained in Cavendish's writing is that a feminized nature displaces "the precise modes of wisdom, control, and strength traditionally attributed to God" (426).

rather than dealing with Nature, in "Part II" the Empress (and by extension, Cavendish) deals with political order.[60] The process of the Empress's "rescue" of her world of origin and the effects of her efforts have implications which resonate throughout the second part of the narrative and connect it on various levels not only to the first part, but also to the apocalyptic visions of the biblical book of Revelations.

There are some fairly transparent parallels between the works of the risen Christ in the New Testament and the works of the Empress in the "Part two" of the *Blazing World.* She is, figuratively speaking, "reborn" into her original world. Since she must manifest herself in her old world in physical form, she is forced to enclose herself in a submarine-type boat and be pulled, under and through the water, for she finds that "as [the] Blazing World had but one Emperor, one government, one religion, and one language, so there was but one passage into that world, which was so little, that no vessel bigger than a packet-boat could go through; neither was that passage always open, but sometimes quite frozen up" (205). The birth canal surely seems an apt tenor for this metaphorical vehicle, and the reference to the "packet boat" echoes the kind of boat in which she came through her icy death-voyage and into this nurturing, watery space to begin with. She has completed her gestation, and is ready to take her place in the world she left behind–to insert herself into a conversation that formerly excluded her, but cannot afford to now.

Beyond her negotiations and water-walking conferences with her own people, like

[60] Also, as Mendelson and Bowerbank point out, here as elsewhere the Empress follows a policy of using "awe-inspiring, rather than life-destroying, tactics for keeping the peace . . .[a]s she says in her epilogue, her text is harmless; the only destructive thing she has done . . . is to kill of some men in a boat, who deserve their fate for kidnaping a lady" (34).

Christ the avenger in the apocalyptic books of the Bible the Empress "harrows" the wrongdoers in this war with what amounts to a lake of burning fire. Her fish-men "carry fire-stones in cases of diamonds . . . and . . . uncase or uncover those fire stones no sooner but when they were just under the enemy's ships, or close at their sides, and then . . . wet them, and set [the enemy's] ships on fire" (211). This completed, her former countrymen, even those who had originally opposed her, "cr[y] out with one voice, that she was an angel sent from God to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies" (211).

It must be remembered, though, that her new status, voice, and ability in her old world are absolutely reliant on her status in the Paradise she has come from, which is in turn dependent on Cavendish's rewriting of that Paradise into a place where the Lady-become-Empress's interior and exterior worth are in harmony. Without the transformative experience she undergoes in the Blazing World, without having found or created a way to validate and authorize the endlessly mutable and self-reflexive subjectivity created by her cultural position and in her writing, she would never have been able to attain the position she has in her second appearance in her old world. Interestingly, she herself has *not* changed, but rather the "Lady" has put on garments which both encase her in armour and create the illusion of brilliance.[61]

The Empress's former world is both distinguished from the Blazing World and brought into communion with it by her use of fire to subdue it. In using fire, she turns this

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[61] "The appointed hour being come, the Empress appeared with garments made of the star-stone, and was born or supported above the water, upon the fish-men's heads and backs, so that she seemed to walk upon the face of the water, and the bird-men and fish-men carried the fire-stone, lighted both in the air, and about the waters" (210)

world into a "blazing" world as well; she effects a second transformation enabled by the first–her own. And although it might seem that her efforts are concentrated upon forming a monolithic state, her adventures in fact have a very different effect, and create once again a world where the composite seems natural. It is in this section that we see the tension between (and to some extent the resolution of) what Lilley calls the "egalitarian potential of her sexual critique" and the "equally powerful commitment to the prerogatives of absolute monarchy and hierarchical privilege" (Lilley 1992: xiv). Although there is a single ruler in the new political order formed by her conquest, the ruler himself is never seen. Instead, the governing body seems comprised of a whole group of nobles who make decisions collectively. The single ruler exists as an idea, but not as a real influence.

In addition, Cavendish creates a political order in the world which cannot really be described as a single monolithic country but rather a patchwork of smaller countries all of which find their final authority in a collective. In bringing these countries together, the Empress does not unify their governments, but rather creates a boundary around them so that the many parts come together as a whole while maintaining to some extent their independent–or at least separate–status. Thus in a remaking of this world, the Empress, and by extension Cavendish, once again create a space where that which is composite predominates over that which is isolated and exclusive.

Thus Sandra Sherman's assertion that the pattern in "all [Cavendish's] work" is that "discourses external to the self (such as seventeenth-century science) are firmly excluded in favor of the self's own inwardly ramifying thoughts" (199), may emphasize the wrong issue. Rather, Cavendish seems to be reacting to the fact that the "external

discourses," particularly those of seventeenth-century natural science, have already firmly excluded her. However, this too is perhaps a backwards way of examining the real problems that Cavendish faced. Since she does not refuse to engage the discourse as much as it refuses (or its participants refuse) to engage her, all that is left to her is either the culturally acceptable silence, or the madness of talking to herself. In a sense, by its exclusion of her Cavendish was isolated from a part of her culture which she considered vital to her self-identification just as surely as Rowlandson was by her capture and removal by Indians. And the only way to avoid real madness in either case is to learn to cope with, and speak of and to, the culture which is left–to reinvent it (at least imaginatively), and somehow make it one's own. Rowlandson does this by becoming an active and viable member of the Indian community in which she finds herself captive, while maintaining a proper Puritan biblical "veneer" of typological references. Cavendish's task is to invent a culture in the isolation of her mind such that it allows her to carry on a dialogue–however contrived–in order to avoid the true madness of absolute self absorption on the one hand, and of absolute emptiness on the other. Even so, the interiority that she creates in part earns her the title of "Mad Madge."

The draw of the captivity trope for the woman writer, as I've tried to establish here, is largely that it allows for a total change of cultural markers. In the case of *The Blazing World*, it gives the ability to rewrite even biblical prophecy and the promised "New Jerusalem" so that women become agents rather than objects, inhabitants and citizens rather than denizens and aliens. What the Empress seems to do in subduing her former world is as much evangelical as it is imperial. The group of nations had been

squabbling amongst themselves before her arrival; her actions create a sort of harmony. The political unit that is formed reflects, in some ways, the entire system of categorization in the Blazing World itself. Rather than many single states vying for authority, the result, like the subject the Empress and the Duchess are part of, is a collective which is unified enough to speak in a single voice, but within which the parts are distinct enough to be in dialogue, or even disagreement, with each other.

The rewriting of religious mythology in which Cavendish engages throughout the *Blazing World*, not to mention the Machiavellian lengths to which the Empress goes to create her religion there, certainly leave Cavendish open to a number of charges. What Jay Stevenson terms Cavendish's "atheism" (529), however, can also be postulated as her rejection of anything which describes itself or is described as dominantly and singularly exclusive. Stevenson's essay quotes passage after passage from Cavendish's work, and all of them show an almost Bakhtinian emphasis on the absolute necessity of dialogue to thought. Refused a place in the conversation being carried on by masculine philosophers of the time, and scorned by many women, who else could Cavendish have talked to, but herself? While her textual subjects avoid solipsism by defining themselves as self-sufficient female atoms, their author escapes the madness that exclusively internal dialogue threatens by inserting her conversation wholesale into the discourse of the day.

Although Cavendish's mind "is a realm complete unto itself, self-directed, self-governing, and self-begot" (Trubowitz 238), she does her best to avoid the solipsism (and its consequent relegation to the production only of works of *phantasie*) of Satan by embedding the argument for her work as a product of an icastic imagination even as she

creates a fantastic persona to deflect criticism, and then by having the subjects produced in the resulting text in constant dialogue with each other. The function of an utopia is to try out various governing schemes and societal structures, but it is at the same time a chance to remake the world, and so Cavendish does, in a way that allows her own self to be self-directed, self-governing, and self-begot. And regardless of the reception of her work, simply by publishing it she placed herself undeniably and irrefutably in the middle of public discourse.

Translated Letters, Liminal Spaces, and Zilia's Imaginary Lover

Orientation in moral space turns out again to be similar to orientation in physical space. We know where we are through a mixture of recognition of landmarks before us and a sense of how we have traveled to get here.
–Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self.*

By the time Zilia, the captive heroine of Françoise de Graffigny's 1747 novel *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*, is finally able to look at the world outside the room in which she has been kept, she has already been captured twice: first by the Spaniards who have destroyed her homeland, and then by the French, who have recaptured her from the Spanish. What she sees almost renders her senseless:

> I dragged myself over to a small window, long the object of my inquisitive desires, and hurriedly opened it. But what did I see? Dear love of my life, I can find no expression to depict for you the extent of my shock and the mortal despair that gripped me upon finding there to be nothing about me save that terrible element the mere sight of which makes one tremble with fear.
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> My first glance explained only too well our dwelling's uncomfortable motion. I am in one of those floating houses of which the Spaniards made use to reach our unfortunate lands and of which I had been given only a highly imperfect description. (41-42)[62]

Surrounded by the ever-changing, yet strangely uniform planes of water and sky, completely out of touch with solid ground and thus bereft of the permanency and uniqueness of *land*scape, Zilia's terror is quite understandable. The image of the boat on

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[62] Although *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* (1747) was originally written and published in French, I will use the MLA English translation throughout most of this chapter, since this study is primarily of English works, and since *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* was translated into English almost immediately upon its publication (in a private email Dr. Peter Sabor has suggested as early as 1749). The only exceptions to this will be when the original French words or idioms are untranslatable, and the original sense of the French is pertinent to the argument.

an endless sea is apt, for Zilia is indeed alone (more so than even she realizes, given Aza's assimilation[63]) and her capture "immerses" her in her captor's culture.

In Graffigny's cultural inversion of the captivity narrative, the capture itself is perpetrated not by indigenous "savages" but by European invaders, and the captive Peruvian "Indian" turns out to be more civilized than her captors. Taking the trope of captivity beyond Cavendish's adaptation, Graffigny's configuration allows for a far more direct social critique; rather than focusing on the exclusion of women from a specific dialogue, Zilia's innocent eye sweeps across the entire cultural landscape before her and finds it wanting. Most specifically, this landscape strikes her as senseless, devoid of meaning, forcing her to construct new cultural landmarks in order to stabilize her locus of speech, that is, to stabilize a sense of herself as an independent subject who is able to produce meaningful speech. The abduction itself, as in *The Blazing World*, offers the suggestion of a masculine authority governing movement and travel, and the factual tone of the scholarly preface and footnotes gives the text the authority of apparent "objectivity." However, the brutal nature of Zilia's abduction undermines the authority of the masculine presence in the work by placing her captors clearly in the wrong, which immediately elevates her to a position of moral superiority. The instability of the locus of

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[63]Aza's cultural assimilation appears to have been very nearly instantaneous. In "Letter II," when Zilia is still a Spanish captive and before she is moved aboard the ship, she answers the one letter Aza sends her, asking "Aza, if you still love me, why am I enslaved? . . . . Your liberty has not been taken from you, yet you do not come to my rescue . . . . No, dearest Aza, these ferocious peoples whom you call Spaniards have not left you free as you think you are" (24). It later becomes clear that Aza has in fact adopted the Spanish culture and religion almost immediately, apparently in order to prevent the treatment Zilia suffers.

ultimate authority in the text enables Zilia's unusual methods of creating space for her voice.

While Rowlandson's actual captivity and factual account describe her struggle to develop strategies of adaptation which allow her the flexibility to exist in one culture while still maintaining ties of identification to another, and Cavendish fantasizes about a utopia which adapts itself to the natures of the subjects she creates, in *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*, fantastic utopian visions are eschewed in favour of a dystopia that reflects and emphasizes the precarious and subordinate nature of a single woman's social position. Graffigny opts for a position between Rowlandson's and Cavendish's texts, where her character explores fantasies of adaptation and the possibilities of power attending them. In the end, her place "betwixt and between," at once outside French culture and immersed in it, becomes a source of strength. Her need to constantly translate between languages and cultures grants her an enormous degree of textual authority, since as the sole unassimilated survivor of the conquest of her nation, she is the only person who is able to effectively execute these translations. Although Christine Roulston suggests that "[t]he novel concludes, as it began, with the construction of an ideal space, in which Zilia is secluded from the world, as she was in her temple" (Roulston 323), this chapter will argue that the space in which Zilia ends up is a permanent reconstruction of the culturally and physically liminal space into which she is originally catapulted, and that this liminal position, far from disabling communication, becomes the means of generating a powerful sense of authority and an unique voice. In order to understand her final position in the narrative, it is useful to examine the connections between Zilia's geographical position and the liminal nature of

the text itself.

I. Disorientation, Decentralization, and the Epistolary Structure

Initially the instability of her position between water and sky disorients and terrifies Zilia, as her account of her view from the window suggests. The impossibility of getting her bearings on the sea mirrors and amplifies her cultural situation, which is also unstable, isolating, and impossible for her to navigate. Immersed in a strange culture, Zilia's need to develop her speaking position compares to Rowlandson's in that through it she *must* find a way to function in the culture of her captors while remaining strongly identified with her culture of origin. Unlike Rowlandson, however, Zilia's captivity is permanent (in the sense that there is no real hope or possibility of return to her culture of origin) and she cannot simply "slip between" the cultures as Rowlandson does. Rather, her ability to cope with her (albeit fictional) environment must resolve itself into a new and enduring subjectivity.

In a strange way, however, Graffigny's fictional narrative of Zilia's abduction and adaptation parallels Rowlandson's account of her actual accommodation to life as a captive. Like Rowlandson, Zilia comes from a culture which depends on a specific, religious, and highly symbolic mythology to give meaning to events and, like Rowlandson, she refuses to allow herself to be trapped in the rigid self-identification such systems can produce. Rowlandson's "bending" of biblical texts to explain her position and her experience leads to a similar flexibility in her subjectivity, which enables both survival in the world of her captors and sanctioned speech in the Puritan community. Although Zilia

seems to rely less heavily on the predictive and explanatory qualities of her Peruvian mythology, like Rowlandson her continued adherence to her original cultural practices and language gives her subjectivity a fluidity and mobility which ironically facilitate her survival and ability to speak while immersed in a totally foreign culture.

Zilia's subjectivity moves according to not only geographical but also temporal space; the only constancy seems to rest, incongruously, in change. When Thomas Kavanagh describes the "moments" in which Zilia seems exclusively to live and by which, at the end of the novel, she expects Déterville to live with her, as "an intensified awareness of existence as a momentary plenitude" (128), he describes time itself as liminal: not past, not future, but a constantly shifting intersection between the two. Zilia learns that she must inhabit liminal spaces like this habitually, and define her subjectivity in relation to cultural landmarks–those people and objects, such as Aza, or even her *quipus*–which, like Rowlandson's biblical typology, symbolize (and therefore allow her to locate and identify herself in relation to) a culture. In Zilia's case, because the actual culture no longer exists, all that remain are these landmarks, and Zilia's identification through "landmarks" rather than the actual culture affords her the flexibility inherent in the use of symbols, since she can move and replace these markers successfully without the trauma caused by clinging to a rigid mythological system–the kind of trauma which, according to the text's "Historical Introduction," Peruvian culture itself underwent.[64] The use of cultural landmarks allows

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[64] The historical introduction to *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* asserts that the rigidity of the Peruvian dependence on mythological interpretations of events led to the culture's downfall:

> The oldest son of the seventh of the Incas . . . had once seen a man of a

for almost infinite mobility and flexibility in the positioning of the locus of speech because, like geographical landmarks, rather than fixing a point in space they offer a method of orienting self to environment; the French and Peruvian cultures themselves overlap in Zilia to such an extent that she must continually reorient her position in relation to them.

Directly after her capture, Zilia's writing clearly reflects both her disorientation and her initial attempts to remedy her situation. With short and confused sentences, some of which she leaves unfinished, Zilia first pleads with the absent Aza, "I am losing that which I love, and the universe is destroyed for me . . . . allow me to die" (42). Her reaction to her own plea, however, suggests that even this early in the narrative Zilia is aware that looking toward her absent lover is in and of itself insufficient to construct a locus of

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> figure quite different from that of a Peruvian. This specter had a long beard, a robe that covered its legs down to the feet, and led an unknown animal by a tether, all of which had frightened the young prince, to whom this phantom had said that he was son of the Sun, brother of *Mancocapac*, and that his name was Viracocha. Unfortunately, this ridiculous fable had been preserved among the Peruvians, so the moment they saw the Spaniards with their long beards and covered legs mounted on animals the likes of which they had never known, they believed themselves to be seeing in them the sons of this Viracocha who had proclaimed himself son of the Sun. It was for this reason that the usurper had himself given by the ambassadors he sent them the title descendant of the God they worshiped. All bowed down before them, for people are the same everywhere. The Spaniards were acclaimed all but unanimously as Gods whose rage even the most lavish offerings and humiliating homages could not assuage. (8-9)

According to this historical theory, which is attached directly to Zilia's story, the refusal of the Inca to accept the coming of the Spanish as chance, and "their insistence on translating the Spaniards in terms of Inca culture only consolidated the catastrophe" (Kavanagh 127), but it is interesting to note that Zilia herself never does this. The catastrophe occurs and stands more or less on its own; she gives it no more symbolic power than it has of itself as the destruction of her culture. Its mythology, if it holds any, is personal rather than cultural.

speech:

> What error is leading me astray! No, dearest Aza, no, it is not you who orders me to live, it is timid nature that, trembling with horror, has borrowed your voice, more powerful than its own, to defer an end it finds ever frightful. But now all is done with, and the most readily available means will deliver me from nature's regrets . . . (42)

In a strange but powerful echoing of Mary Rowlandson's *ubi sunt* passage, Zilia takes back her life in a decisive way, even as she decides to end it. Just as Rowlandson discovers her own agency in deciding to live ("I chose rather to go along with those . . . Ravenous Beasts, than that moment to end my dayes" (70)), Zilia recognizes her responsibility for her survival or death and begins to realize that "borrowing" Aza's voice is not an effective means by which to communicate–even with herself.

Zilia is left, then, in the middle of the ocean, in the hull of a ship, with physical landmarks removed from her as well as cultural ones, struggling to find a space from which to launch her voice. Her often-quoted cry, "Oh heavens above! To what class am I to assign myself?" (87) suggests that she is well aware of the liminal space she occupies, and she begins to resolve the conflicts this situation creates by matching her perception of the world to her own cultural position–a position mirrored by the text she inhabits.

In terms of its reception and influence, the text of *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* itself occupies a liminal space. Its almost immediate translation into English and its prolonged early popularity (it was published at least three more times before the end of the eighteenth century[65]), create a somewhat paradoxical situation. Although printed in English, it was certainly not an English novel, and yet its translation meant that neither

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[65] In 1771, 1774, and 1782 (Miller 441).

was it entirely French. But its translated state, between one culture and another, certainly facilitated both its dissemination and its rise to popularity. Nancy K. Miller remarks that *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* was "one of the most widely read novels in the eighteenth century" (Miller 127), and in English Showalter's words *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* was not only a best-seller, it was also "one of the period's most outstanding literary events" (Showalter 1964: 20). However, Janet Altman points out that "literary historians and critics of subsequent centuries have been content to see this novel as a decidedly 'undistinguished' work" (Altman, "Making Room": 34). This attitude toward the novel comes largely from an acceptance, Altman notes, of the view that it is "merely one of the numerous 'imitations' of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721), an imitation that managed to gain success by also imitating the *Lettres portugaises* (1669)" (Altman, "Making Room": 34). This assessment has been rendered more convincing by the fact that it is "in part simply . . . a convenient way of describing the novel to a twentieth-century public more familiar with the *Lettres persanes* and the *Lettres portugaises* than with Graffigny's novel" (Altman, "Making Room": 37).

However, Altman also notes that

> If we look more closely at the ways in which criticism has already attempted to deal with the novel's difference–that is, its problematic deviation from the narrative models that it is purported to imitate–we detect a pattern whereby the novel is judged to "fail" because it does not conform to those models. In other words, the novel has thus far effectively been dismissed from further consideration by the simultaneous assertion that it is an "imitation" and that it does not imitate closely enough. (38)[66]

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[66] Altman notes that Graffigny actually makes a concerted effort to resist the established patterns for sentimental heroines and cultural outsiders. "Indeed," she says,

This attitude seems markedly similar to those shown toward women writers of the time as a rule (witness the mocking of the *précieuses*), and, interestingly, to describe the attitudes shown by Zilia herself toward other characters in her story. She refuses to be fully imitative of the kind of subjectivity the women of France display; indeed, she disdains it and them, commenting on their lack of individuality: "In the beginning, by arousing the curiosity of others, I amused my own, but when only the eyes can be used, they are soon sated. All the women paint their faces the same colour. They always adopt the same manner, and I believe that they always say the same things" (75). In the end she rejects what Thomas Downing refers to as the "bankrupt economy" of polite society in favour of the society of her mind.

Somewhat surprisingly, judging from initial reactions to her novel, even though its conclusion gave rise to numerous unauthorized sequels and many letters urging various marriages for Zilia, Graffigny succeeded in garnering both positive attention for her work and respect and acclaim for herself as a writer. Although Showalter notes that "the greatest obstacle for Madame de Graffigny lay not in her own timidity, nor lack of education, nor dependency on pensions, but rather the social barriers against her entering the [writing] profession directly" (Showalter 1977: 303), Altman's inquisitive and incisive

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> if we delve more thoroughly into the gap between Graffigny's choices and the more familiar paradigms in Enlightenment fiction, we discover that Graffigny's *originality* can be located precisely in the alternative itinerary that she imagines. For Graffigny's choices constitute a rigorously conceived deviation from works that 1) organize their narrative around a westernized male's quest and conquest and 2) represent 'undeveloped' peoples as 'naturally' and inevitably subordinate to their conquerors. (Altman, "Making Room": 39)

critique of the reception of Graffigny's novel from 1743 through 1913 suggests that perhaps the atmosphere of Enlightenment France was well prepared for *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*. With few exceptions, "Graffigny is acclaimed as a writer, not as a woman writer. Critics position her within generic traditions, not gendered traditions, citing her as the peer of Montesquieu for the philosophic novel and Richardson for the sentimental novel." Altman further notes that "[i]n 1751 Prévost dedicated his translation of *Clarissa* to Françoise de Graffigny, the only French writer whom he was willing to place in a pantheon with Samuel Richardson" (Altman 1991: 267).

The way in which Graffigny structures her novel may have to do with the early acceptance and popularity of her work. The text, like so many novelistic texts, is itself a cross–in this case between the *roman sentimentale* and the *roman philosophique*–and the situation of the text "betwixt and between" these two kinds of writing deflects the kind of ridicule directed at women such as the *précieuses* who took themselves and their writing too seriously, while the serious nature of the issues addressed in the narrative salvages the text from pure "potboilerism." Bonnie Robb also mentions that "there is embedded in the text a *roman d'apprentissage* which further complicates the novel's status" (Robb 148). She goes on to remark that the tale not only recounts Aza's abandonment of Zilia but also "the story of her disengagement—apparently blameless, even virtuous—from him. The correspondence constitutes an apprenticeship through which Zilia achieves moral independence from Aza" and the letters themselves become "distance markers rather than distance breakers" (Robb 148).

This marking of separation is only one of the tasks that the epistolary structure

takes on for the author. The lack of a central authority and the assumption of audience intrinsic to the epistolary form also combine to deny any simple monological voice. Graffigny places her public, anthropological, "scientific" and therefore (as Cavendish's life suggests) masculine-dominated voice only in the margins of her intensely private, emotional, and thus "feminine" love letters, thereby "displac[ing] [the "masculine" notes] from the reader's focus of attention" (Wolfgang, 20-21).[67] Aurora Wolfgang remarks that "[n]ot only do Graffigny's footnotes break the narrative flow, their style is deliberately non-narrative . . . . They are the very antithesis of the fervent declarations of a feminine style" (Wolfgang 26).

Even the earliest parts of the narrative reflect the disjunction of these two styles of writing. Zilia cries out an indictment of her captors in a series of highly emotional and wholly rhetorical questions:

> What people is so ferocious as to be unmoved by signs of pain? What arid desert witnessed the birth of humans insensitive to the voice of nature groaning? These barbarous masters of *Yalpor*,[10] proud of their power to exterminate, are guided in their actions by cruelty alone! Oh Aza, how will you escape their fury? Where are you? What are you doing? If my life is dear to you, advise me of your fate. (18)

The footnote number beside the word *Yalpor* directs the reader to the bottom of the page, where a dry phrase informs the reader: "The name for thunder." This single piece of information given in a monological monotone contrasts sharply with the anguish apparent in Zilia's questioning of fate. Although it does interrupt the narrative voice, the footnote

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[67] Wolfgang asserts that although the main text of Zilia's letters "expresses a gendered and subjective point of view, which Lanser terms a 'personal voice'," the scholarly annotations are written "from a traditionally masculine 'authorial voice'" (Wolfgang 25, n. 33).

remains outside the boundaries of the narrative itself, and almost irrelevant to it. Thus although the text includes the voice of fact, science, detached observation and certainty, it relocates this voice firmly in the margins, while privileging the absolute subjectiveness of immediate lived physical and emotional experience. The voice of unity and certainty–of being one thing or another completely–is not excluded, but it is decentered as a dominant force.

"Decentered," however, might be a misleading word to use, since it suggests that the voice of unity and certainty has been at one time central: an inaccurate assumption in the case of this text. Although the preface introducing the work certainly speaks in this voice, it is important to note that the preface was added only in the second edition. The marginal notes serve, like Aza, more as landmarks for the reader than as anchors for the narrative itself; they suggest a kind of historical/factual authenticity, and situate the text in relation to what is represented as Peruvian culture, but they are neither intrinsic nor essential to the narrative itself. In the same way, Aza's masculine presence (actually an absence, a marker of distance) from which Zilia seems to take so much strength is also both marginalized and relegated to the position of cultural landmark rather than anchor or inspiration–a point I will return to shortly. Nevertheless, the connection between main text and footnotes keeps these two "spheres" in dialogue with each other, and thus the easy distinctions that binary oppositions demarcate, notably fact and fiction, are carefully refuted.[68]

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[68] Significantly, Graffigny at first constructs and then dismantles gender parallels between modes of address and gender-specific occupations. The mode of writing that Zilia first uses–the "quipus" or strings knotted in a mnemonic code–is uniquely tied to a form of

The binary nature of gendered power distribution is also disrupted by Zilia's liminal cultural position. Whereas Aza had been her teacher and the provider of her knowledge in Peru, she tacitly acknowledges that in the unfamiliar territory of France, her ability to translate will result in his needing to learn from her in order to survive as an exiled Peruvian. She will bring him, she claims, all that she can of the books she has heard of, and will explain (*expliquer*) them to him in their native tongue (89). She sets herself up as the one who can and will translate–the one who can exist in the liminal space between linguistic systems. But the French verb "expliquer," like the English "explain" or "explicate," goes farther than simple translation (traduire) and firmly locates Zilia in a position of mastery–a position enabled by her ability to straddle two cultures, "reading" and "speaking" to both simultaneously.

The acquisition of something as permanent and mind-altering as a new language ensures that just as Zilia's Peruvian language keeps her Peruvian, the French language has caused at least a partial assimilation into French culture, for as Kavanagh points out, "[b]eing a part of a culture means accepting the power of its sustaining symbolic order to explain reality, to find within what happens not the haphazard fruits of chance but the working of understood causalities" (Kavanagh 127). It is this linguistic assimilation, always partial where Zilia is concerned, which leads to her position as translator, a

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"women's work"–that is, the private creation of textile works. What she ends up with, after having acquired the "art" of French writing, is almost a vocation in philosophy–she becomes a *philosophe*–a notably masculine pursuit. Miller comments on this, and on the complicated relationship between the (feminine) home textile industry and the (masculine) accounting of public events in "The Knot, the Letter, and the Book: Graffigny's *Peruvian Letters*" (139 ff).

position enabled by her use both of the epistolary form and of Aza as audience. The epistolary form also allows Graffigny herself a degree of fluidity in her subjectivity and the ability to launch an extensive social critique. In a kind of proto-orientalism, by using an observing eye from the realm of the exotic "other" and appearing to emphasize the differences between the two cultures, the narrative is able instead to emphasize the similarities between the French culture and its *construction* of the exotic.[69] Zilia's unique ability to translate gives her observations and critiques an autonomy and authority best understood if prefaced with an introduction to her unique position in her permanent captivity, and the methods she employs to orient herself in that position.

II. Familiar Sights, Markers of Meaning

Janet Altman comments on Zilia's "productive assertion of a Peruvian identity, equality, and sovereignty within a Europe that claims to have conquered Peru" (Altman,

[69] Jack Undank points to the text's proto-orientalism:

> Between the Peruvians and the French there are, to be sure, differences of custom, belief, and manners, but they turn out to be the accidental surface, the outer historical crust of a topography saturated by the sameness of those immanent values Zilia instinctively locates wherever she may be–the values, the *beaux sentiments*, that Grafigny [sic] herself relies upon in her readers. Indeed the closer one studies Zilia's well-bred tastes and moral disposition . . . the closer one comes to realize that Zilia is, after all, recognizably . . . French. (Undank 299)

He goes on to defend Graffigny, claiming that he does not "dismiss [her] characterization as yet one more case of a French eighteenth-century author appropriating and smothering all otherness in the attempt to understand or display it," and argues that "[s]omething else is at stake."

"Making Room": 39). Paradoxically, in order to maintain this sovereignty and identity Zilia must allow some aspects of Europe to permeate her sense of herself.[70] This allows us to read the "Peruvianness" that sets her apart the same way that Benedict Anderson notes we can "read Mary Rowlandson *as* American precisely because, in captivity, she saw English fields before her" (Anderson 315). The paradoxical maintenance of her Peruvian nature through partial assimilation allows Zilia to triumph over the supposed conquest of her culture, for as long as she is Peruvian and sovereign (if captive), Peru has not been utterly defeated, as it has been in Aza: "This Aza," mourns Zilia after his rejection of her, "the object of so much love, is not the same Aza that I painted for you with such tender colours" (163). Aza is unfaithful; he has been seduced by Spain, its women, and its culture. He is, therefore, no longer even recognizably Peruvian. Only Zilia has remained able to orient herself simultaneously between the worlds of France and Peru; Aza has lost himself. Although she names him victor over her, she is equally able to name him "*ingrat.*"

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[70] The historical "Introduction" to the novel gives an explanation of the Moon as a figure in Inca mythology that validates and to some extent strengthens Zilia's position as she struggles both to maintain her own culture and create a new one. It also highlights the importance of Zilia's struggle:

> They also had a great deal of reverence for the Moon, which they treated as the Sun's wife and sister. They regarded the Moon as the mother of all things, but like all Indians, they believed that she would bring about the destruction of the world by allowing herself to drop onto the earth, which she would annihilate by her fall. ("Introduction" 11)

Not only does she have the authority and the power to create a new society, so too does she have the power to destroy the old one, but only at a cost, for the fall to Earth would surely obliterate the Moon as well. Zilia is responsible for keeping her culture alive, and to do so she must keep her own sense of Peruvianness alive, for in this model, if she falls she is both responsible for her culture and destroyed with it.

suggesting that he is in her debt. Thus she is in some way in a position of power over him, and within a page or two she even notes that his actions are not even worthy of her regret.

Zilia's adherence to "Peruvian" ideals while immersed in French culture places her in a liminal position in the text, a position which produces a subjectivity defined and oriented by "cultural landmarks" because of its very nature; liminal spaces are liminal only because of their relationship to the spaces that combine to define them, and Zilia's subjectivity defines itself in relation to symbols which orient her in reference to the cultures between which she lives.

The dialogue between cultures that Zilia embodies orients a plane of speech where Zilia's subjectivity is neither purely of one culture nor purely of another, and thus fits its surroundings exactly. However, the many steps involved in this transition are painful indeed. Zilia's agony comes at first from her fears that her beloved Aza will never know "where I am, if I love you, if I exist," a circumstance she believes will lead to the "destruction of her being" (42). And yet, after her attempts at self-destruction have been thwarted, her first remark to Aza is "*you* have not lost all" (43, emphasis added). Paradoxically, after a letter entirely concerned with her own losses, her comment to Aza concerns itself with what *he* has retained. Zilia's affirmation subtly acknowledges that within the structure of this text, Aza's very existence depends upon her ability to speak/write;[71] her death in the text would carry the inescapable consequence of his erasure along with it. In return, the concept of Aza's absence enables Zilia to recreate him as a

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[71] The very nature of the *quipos* assumes speech, since they were prompts to the memory of a particular individual. The translation to French both removes the physical act of speaking from the equation and enlarges the potential audience.

cultural landmark, since the nature of landmarks and their usefulness depend greatly upon their distance from their user; a landmark that is too close to a traveller's current location restricts rather than enables movement, since it does not allow orientation in a larger space. If Aza were present, not only would Zilia's reason for writing evaporate, she would be restricted by her dependence on him to establish her identity. He would define, rather than orient, her position as subject.

Zilia's need to remain attached to Aza as landmark, and through him symbolically to Peru, stems in part from her perception of French culture. Because of the directness of the social critique intrinsic to Zilia's narrative, the text cannot indulge in the kind of fantastic utopian vision Margaret Cavendish espouses in *The Blazing World*. Because of the power and autonomy issues Zilia brings up over and over, it is clear that marriage and assimilation into the French culture will not bring her the advantages it provides for the Empress in the Blazing World; in fact, quite the opposite. Although Zilia's anguished response to Déterville's marriage proposal, "You are not of my nation" (99), seems to suggest that she bases her rejection of Déterville on miscegenist fears, and although Fourny suggests that "Zilia appears to repeat Aza's telling 'silence' by ignoring Déterville's love" (Fourny 233), to accept this as the full explanation would be to miss Zilia's own evaluation of the culture of marriage in France. After a stinging critique of the affectations French women are taught, and their (lack of) education, Zilia pronounces this indictment of the French version of marriage:

> A husband can, without fearing any punishment, treat his wife in the most repellent manner, dissipate on extravagances as criminal as they are excessive not only his assets and those of his children but those of his victim as well while making her groan in near indigence through his

> miserliness in matters of honest expenses–a trait very frequently found allied here with prodigality. He is authorized to punish harshly the appearance of a slight infidelity while abandoning himself shamelessly to all those that libertinage suggests to him. In the end, dearest Aza, it seems that in France the bonds of marriage are reciprocal only at the moment the wedding is celebrated. (149)

Thus, Zilia's rejection of Déterville is not simply an expression of miscegenist fears; rather, it is a refusal based on a well-reasoned and intelligent assumption stemming from the acute observation that to accept him would be to accept those aspects of French culture which would render her subordinate, derivative, and dependent. It is not so much Déterville Zilia rejects as it is the role of a French wife.

As Downing observes, "[i]f Zilia were to accept Déterville's advances, as woman she would enter into the economy exemplified by the social visit" (Downing 60), and would thus be utterly devalued, reduced to a holding place for words. Downing's article gives a lucid and fascinating explanation of the "bankrupt" economy by and in which Parisian women lived. Accumulating praise as a kind of capital requires their presence, while in their absence this apparent capital is eroded by words of derision. "Since the compliment exists only as a detached signifier," he says, "all the use value has been transformed into exchange value. Furthermore, the constant circulation–that is, the alternating presence and absence of the women–guarantees that all value will remain thoroughly relative" (Downing 60).[72]

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[72] Furthermore, as Zilia reports to Aza, there is a servant who not only speaks but visits in place of the mistress:

> In the great households, a domestic is responsible for fulfilling social obligations. Every day he makes a considerable journey to go tell one person of concern for his health, another that there is grieving over his

Zilia also notes the hollowness of women's education; after a fairly lengthy discussion of the lack of proper training women receive, she sums the situation up: "they expect their women to practice virtues with which they do not acquaint them; indeed, they do not even give them an accurate idea of the terms that designate them" (145). Zilia's refusal to enter into the conversation of polite French society, coupled with her inability to return to Peru, leaves her with the same alternatives Cavendish faced: the madness of talking to herself, or the need to transform the isolation of the mind into a place where dialogue, however artificially sustained, can occur. Zilia's solution to this problem is to create not a utopian world but a utopian audience (and thus an audience that is always "hoped for" although never "real," giving it the distance that allows it to exist as a landmark for her locus of speech), a creation that even she subtly admits is a fantasy. She models her audience on Aza, the figure who most resembles, she thinks, her ideal, identifying him both as audience and as a landmark by which to orient her locus of speech.

Zilia clearly expresses the need for landmarks, significantly, just after she has first spotted signs of land of the horizon. She muses:

> Time like space is known only by its limits. Our ideas and our sight are equally lost when confronted with the constant uniformity of one or the other. If objects mark the boundaries of space, it seems to me that our hopes mark those of time and that if those hopes abandon us or cease to be clearly delineated, we no more perceive the duration of time than we do the

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> suffering or rejoicing at his pleasure. When this domestic returns, no one listens to the replies he brings back. There is mutual agreement to hold to the form while placing no interest in it, and these attentions take the place of friendship. (127)

air that fills all space. (47)[73]

Later she adds, "One thinks that the only limits to one's sight to be found are the ends of the world itself. This error flatters us, for it gives us a satisfying notion of our own stature and seems to bring us closer to the Creator of so many marvels" (60). Her discovery that the world does not end with her own personal horizons forces her to redefine her own "stature" and her position in the world through the recognition that the landmarks she formerly used are themselves relative, and that certainty is an illusion–a realization which distances her from the "divine" Aza, (whose status as Capa-Inca confirmed his place as son of the Sun ("Historical Introduction" 12)) and foreshadows her realization of how illusory her own construction of him is.

Thus of particular importance to this passage is the fact that almost immediately before it, at the very end of the previous letter, Zilia addresses Aza as "my dear hope" (46). Her linking of time and space, her use of the concept of hope as a landmark, and her insistence upon "clearly delineating" Aza as this hope (thus distancing him) point toward her construction of him both as utopian and as a landmark without which her "ideas and sight" are lost. Aza becomes, for Zilia, a symbol rather than an individual. Particularly because Aza *does* eventually "abandon" Zilia, her "delineation" of her image of him and his significance as a symbol become crucial to her orientation of herself. Thus given the

[73] Even at an early stage in the narrative, the recognition of her landmarks as constructions allows Zilia to continue to construct, and to continue to change by description, those things that surround her. Already the fire in Déterville's eyes "recalls the image of that fire [she] saw in [Aza's eyes]" (45), and thus Zilia is already preparing for the possibility of Aza's permanent absence by setting up the possibility of Déterville as a replacement audience, although in the end she seems to realize the inefficiency of specific individuals as audiences and opts instead for a more general one by the act of publication.

importance of time and space to language and communication–particularly when it takes the form of letters–Aza's position as cultural landmark (rather than distinct individual) becomes absolutely essential to Zilia's writing of this particular text.[74] And now that she has hope personified in her "delineation" of Aza, she proclaims: "I taste the pleasure of regaining my peace of mind, and in regaining my peace of mind, I taste the pleasure of regaining the ability to think" (47).

In the end, however, Zilia's mental creation of Aza far exceeds the original. Rejected eventually by Aza, she rejects him in turn, and recognizes finally that her need is not for a specific figure but rather for an audience generally, an audience which, as this chapter will go on to show, becomes (like Aza) perfectly attuned to Zilia's needs. Her ability to imagine this audience, and to speak to it in more than one language (and in translation), allows the cultures of Peru and France to be in dialogue with each other, a dialogue Zilia removes from the isolation of her mind and the madness of solipsism by publishing, thus rendering her imagined audience "real," if not ideal.

Thus when Janet Whatley notes that "the unique and solely privileged interlocutor has to be removed and even discredited before Zilia can undertake her own appropriation of the world" and that "even as Zilia is losing Aza without knowing it, she is also–just out of her awareness– building up the habits of thinking, working, and living that will make it possible for her to live without him" (Whatley 419), what she seems to be indirectly

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[74] The importance even of physical landmarks becomes clear when Zilia finds herself in Déterville's carriage in France. Her first reaction to the carriage's movement is fear, for the remembrances of her despair in the boat come back to her immediately. However, Déterville is able to put her at ease simply by opening the window so that she can see out, and thus in some way position herself through landmarks.

identifying is the transformation of Zilia's subjectivity from dependent subordinate to independent agent, which corresponds with the process of clarification of Aza's nature as cultural landmark rather than individual. Whether she writes with *quipos* or in French, Aza is never a respondent–the letters do not rely on *his* presence.[75] In the end, they do not even depend on his absence.

This, in combination with her cultural situation, brings Zilia to an interesting linguistic crisis. The perfect audience Aza comes to represent becomes a reflection of Zilia's own identity. Miller's remark, "[t]o write 'as a woman' is to write at a remove from one's represented identity, but in dialogue with it, with that self as Other" (Miller 136) is embodied by Zilia's exclamation in only her second letter to Aza: "what infernal power has separated us from ourselves?" (28). The inseparability of Aza from Zilia's self, strengthened by the brother-sister tie they share as well as by their betrothal, gives the sense of a single unit or entity, even in these early letters, and the cryptic nature of the knots Zilia ties in her *quipus* (decipherable only to herself) emphasizes the circular nature of her speech. As she comments, "[m]y letter is finished, and the characters composing it have been drawn solely for me" (103).

As in Cavendish's case, such absolute, solipsistic self-absorption should be self-destructive. Diane Fourny suggests that "[a] being able to measure itself only against itself, reduced to the extreme mental experience of pure sensory impressions, barely retains human identity" (Fourny 224), and that "[a]lthough Zilia appears to have re-established a

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[75] Aza does write one letter; Zilia records its arrival early in the narrative (22). However, the letter itself, and along with it any remnants of Aza's speech, do not appear in the text.

dialogue with the outside world by inventing a dialogue with Aza, she has again merely locked herself within a self-constructed and enclosed world. Her letters (destined never to be answered), *fatally* condemn her to believing in an illusion of reciprocity until the moment when she is confronted by the fact of Aza's absence, which must at last be accepted as betrayal" (Fourny 230, emphasis added). However, the fact that Zilia neither dies nor stops writing upon having been rejected by Aza suggests that the self-dialogue, illusory as it has been, has served its purpose. In fact, Zilia's recognition early on that it *is* illusory speaks to her acknowledgment of this fact and of her acceptance of this illusion as necessary to bridge the gap to the "outside world."

Indeed, after having been told that Aza yet lives, Zilia betrays, in spite of her raptures, her doubts both about Aza the man and about her own circular self-sufficient subjectivity: "But can I doubt your heart? My own answers for it. You love me, your joy is equal to mine, you burn with the same fires, the same impatience consumes you" (109). Her heart responds for his–and clearly (given Aza's eventual rejection of her) responds incorrectly. Thus her heart, although it uses the placeholder of Aza as a symbol, in fact responds only for herself, this "self" which is so intimately linked to the (br)other[76] that its very sentiments are the same. Even after Aza's final departure the illusion returns, as she recounts to Déterville: "If Aza's memory comes to my mind, I see it from the same perspective I saw it then and believe myself to be in that place awaiting his arrival. I give myself over to this illusion so long as it is agreeable to me. If it leaves me, I turn to books" (170). In fact, Zilia's communication must be largely self-reflexive and her audience

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[76] Miller's interesting appellation for Aza.

illusory since as Madeline Dobie points out, "for the greater part of the novel, Zilia is unaware if Aza is alive or dead" (Dobie 220).

The incorporation of Aza "into" Zilia, of the (br)other into the self, leaves room for and invites the examination not of the process of coming-to-writing, for Zilia's role as a writer clearly predates this text, but rather the process of coming to a place where the speaking subject of the text may use her voice in a public way. Miller suggests that "[w]hat the novel will work out is the transformation of this model from transitivity to intransitivity, from 'writing *to*' to writing" (Miller 149). In the end, she asserts, "[t]he terms of closure make it possible for the pleasure of solitude experienced in writing *to* the other to be transformed into the pleasure of writing as an act of self-reference–or rather, self to the world, neither authorized nor mediated by the fiction of the unique masculine other" (Miller 149). What Miller describes here is reminiscent of the solipsism found in the subject positions created in Cavendish's *Blazing World*, with the exception of the interjection "–or rather, self to the world." What Miller gestures toward here is a process through which Zilia apparently renders her writing intransitive–that is, in a sense solipsistic in that she is both speaker/writer and audience. However, as the next section explores, although Zilia does establish herself as her own ideal audience, there is also evidence (such as her sudden change of languages and the resulting shift in her relationship to Aza) that she locates her locus of speech not by distancing the world but by working out a relationship to it in very public terms–evidence which is present even in her story's earliest moments.

III. Going Public

It is in the transition space between letters XVII and XVIII, the point at which Zilia learns to write in French that Aza's position as a placeholder rather than a person, a symbol rather than a character, becomes most obvious. Eugénia Leal expresses an attitude toward the consequences of Zilia's linguistic change that critics sometimes espouse when she describes the correspondence as "[c]ondamnée au solipsisme," and perhaps in a sense it is. However, the unselfconsciousness with which the sudden linguistic change occurs, and the fact that the correspondence continues as though it had never been interrupted, suggests that we as critics need to read Zilia's apparent obliviousness to such an obvious difficulty as deliberate and in some sense necessary, rather than as a capitulation to solipsism. The change in languages absolutely erases the possibility of Aza the individual as audience at the same time as it confirms the possibility of these letters as public rather than private documents, for if in fact we are to preserve the illusion of Aza as a reader, we must now acknowledge that he will never be the *only* reader, for he must out of necessity employ at least one translator.[77] Furthermore, Zilia makes it quite clear that Aza himself is no longer her *raison d'être*, no matter what else she might say, for she states outright not only that her "conversations" with Aza constitute only an "artificial pleasure" but also that the act of writing alone is sufficient to give her a sense of self: "I feel myself brought back to life by this tender occupation. Restored to myself, I feel as if I am beginning to live

[77] As a captive/convert of the Spanish, Aza would now speak Peruvian and Spanish, but not French.

again" (80). In a sense, Zilia admits here what Rowlandson is forced to admit when she relates the circumstances of her capture: that her life is more precious to her even than the dearest cultural markers she believes define her identity.[78]

After having learned French, Zilia exclaims:

> Oh Aza, how dear you are to me, what joy I feel in telling you so, in depicting this fact, in giving this sentiment all the kinds of existence it can have! I would like to inscribe it on the hardest metal, on the walls of my room, on my clothes, on all that surrounds me, and express it in all languages. (80)

Miller remarks that Zilia's desire to inscribe her feelings in "all languages" moves "not only from the intimacy of the epistolary to the judgement of audience, but beyond the naturalized writing of epistolary relations to the guilty pleasures of publishing and transmission, dissemination, and translation" (Miller 146). Thus Zilia's desire exists in a liminal space not only between the French and Peruvian cultures, but also, since she must translate/*expliquer* her Peruvian thoughts into French, between public and private communication spaces. Her writing is motivated not out of desire for Aza but rather from a "desire for authorship." As Christine Roulston notes, "Aza is simultaneously included in and excluded from Zilia's new language, thereby revealing that her pleasure in the beloved has subtly shifted to the pleasure of the text, and to what Zilia devotedly calls her 'tendre

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[78] Rowlandson's admission takes an almost confessional tone:

> I had often before said, that if the *Indians* should come, I should chuse rather to be killed by them than be taken alive, but when it came to the tryal my mind changed; their glittering weapons so daunted my spirit, that I chose rather to go along with those (as I may say) ravenous Beasts, than that moment to end my dayes. (Rowlandson 70)

occupation'" (Roulston 322).[79] Regardless of the presence (or absence) of Aza, the audience is what becomes of primary importance to the formation of subjectivity in this text, for as Showalter tells us, "after 1725 every literate French man or woman writing a private letter would have been aware of the possibility of publication, intended or not" (Showalter 1986: 115).

This assumption of a public audience is not limited to Zilia's writing in French, and is always in question, despite the apparently private nature of the letters. Kavanagh maintains that because of the distinctive character of *quipus*, "[the knots] speak as they do only for Zilia at the moment she knots them. She is the single possible reader able to use their mnemonic structure as a prod to speech" (Kavanagh 141).[80] Without her translation of them into French, he says, the *quipus* have "no more permanence than her cries" (Kavanagh 142). However, the actual nature of the *quipus* is totally at odds with the kind of privacy suggested by this fact and embodied in the intensely personal narrative form Zilia uses them to inscribe. Given that the "Introduction" to the *Lettres* clearly suggests that the *quipus* were used and kept by public officials, and recorded "d'annales, de codes, de rituels, de cérémonies, etc." (13), there is already some suggestion that, although Zilia's letters seem intensely personal, they were even at their inception meant in some way for

[79] In characterizing the actual process of letter writing, just as she is running out of *quipus*, Zilia describes her relationship to writing using eerily similar words to those which she uses to describe her relationship to Aza. Her writing is, she says, "le plaisir de [son] âme, le soutien de [sa] vie" (72); Aza has been, by turns, "délices de [son] âme" (68) and "le soutien de [sa] vie" (21).

[80] Kavanagh's article describes in some detail the history and use of the quipus, and the limits placed on who could read them and why (140-141).

public consumption. Consequently, the fact that she was writing the story of the relationship between herself and Aza when the Spaniards attacked suggests that her relationship to him had a public status that outweighed even the depth of personal feeling. The very fact that her desire is to "rendr[e] immortelle l'histoire de notre amour" (19) suggests that her purpose in writing, though disguised as private, is actually fully public.[81]

Whereas Margaret Cavendish creates a private world in which her female speakers become "natural" inhabitants, Zilia's strength of voice comes from her position as denizen–a position shared by Graffigny herself, as both women put their private thoughts in a public space. Interestingly, as Altman notes, unlike the other characters in her narrative, Zilia is able to imagine a France in which "Peruvians" can live, "provided they retain their critical ability to operate dialectically within both cultures. Zilia's doubled discourse of the self is neither schizophrenic . . . or [sic] hysteric . . . . For Zilia's doubled discourse actively keeps her differing cultural voices together in delicate balance, in a universe that more than once threatens her poise" (Altman, "Graffigny's Epistemology": 182). It is exactly Zilia's ability to exist on the boundaries of two cultures–one which she refuses and one which (in the guise of Aza) has refused her–which allows Zilia to speak at all. Without the inherent exoticism afforded by her status as Peruvian in France, her

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[81] Furthermore, prior even to the cataclysmic arrival of the Spanish, Dobie notes, "[t]he scene of writing which opens her text, referring back to the earlier text broken off by the attack on the temple, demonstrates that the love story of the two Peruvians was always already a story. By this I mean that it is predicated on the absence, separation and temporal distance which are not simply represented in the narrative but are expressed by the very act of writing" (Dobie 104).

actions would be deemed culturally unacceptable (or at least deviant).[82] She recognizes this, but refuses to assimilate French cultural standards, turning her French estate into a place where the rule of moral law so important to Inca culture reigns supreme. As she remarks to Déterville, "Perhaps your nation's lavish notions of decency do not allow a person of my age the independence and solitude in which I now live, or at least so Céline tries to persuade me every time she comes to see me. But she has yet to offer strong enough reasons to convince me. True decency is in my heart" (170).

Jack Undank suggests that because she is involved in "trumped-up scenarios of novels filled with outlandish marauders, abductions, and separated lovers–Zilia comes to function as a distancing, universal metaphor for the aporias of female 'feeling' or *sentiment*" (Undank 299). While this is part of the issue that the novel seeks to address, the similarities between Peruvian-ness and French-ness Undank identifies[83] also have a significant role in the development of Zilia's subjectivity. In fact, this similarity functions not unlike the shadowy cultural similarities that insinuate themselves into Mary Rowlandson's narrative–forcing the subject to reformulate itself with entirely different cultural and social landmarks. However, although Zilia's response to her traumatic capture and resituation recalls Mary Rowlandson's struggle for voice, and although the two narratives may have some superficial commonalities, Graffigny's text lines up much more closely with Margaret Cavendish's in that it explores opportunity and choice in ways that

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[82] Any "deviant" behavior Zilia displays is also mitigated by the by now clearly reprehensible act of capturing her in the first place. Irregular social practices she might engage in pale in comparison to the brutality of her capture.

[83] See n. 69 p.118.

Rowlandson's narrative simply cannot; Graffigny's text, like Cavendish's but unlike Rowlandson's, is not bound by the narrative constraints of events that actually happened, and Zilia is given a status and "*classe*" which, although she cannot define them properly for herself, certainly set her up in ways that make writing a comfortable occupation.[84] Graffigny also gives Zilia an almost fantastic degree of independence as a landholder, and although the way in which she acquires her property raises questions about her autonomy, the architecture of the very house she retires to illustrates most clearly the position of authority from which she speaks, a position rooted in the process of translation.

IV. Living in Translation

Zilia's need to bridge the linguistic gap between the Peruvian and French cultures is absolutely imperative, particularly after she learns of Aza's permanent and complete assimilation into Spanish culture. Aza's infidelity and assimilation renders Peruvian, for Zilia, a dead language, and Aza as an imagined audience almost unimaginable. But Zilia's critique of the French language reveals problems with it as well. "Politeness," she observes, "consists of countless words without meaning, marks of respect without esteem.

[84] In fact, the position in which Graffigny places Zilia would be no less, for Graffigny, than utopian. Herself a woman abused by her husband and deserted by her lover, whose country no longer exists and who is absolutely dependent upon friends and relatives for her very food and shelter, Graffigny gives her heroine a room of her own–more, a whole house–and enough money that she need not worry herself about material things (the "Preface" to the novel notes that "[W]e owe this translation to Zilia's leisure in her retreat" (4)). Correspondingly, Zilia sets herself to write. Through Zilia's voice, Graffigny transcends the constraints of her living environment through expressing them–at a distance from herself.

and pains taken without affection" (127). Since French as the French use it is judged to be valueless as a conveyance for meaning, the only possible alternative, given Zilia's almost physical need to communicate meaningfully,[85] is the translation of Peruvian meaning into French words.

Even this proves only a partial remedy, as her attempts at this kind of translation reveal to what extent her language remains outside of the French culture, while part of it:

> If I attempt to explain to them what I mean by moderation, without which virtues themselves are practically vices, if I speak to them of decency of manners, of treating one's inferiors with consideration–something little done in France–and of steadfastly shunning those of base quality, I notice from their embarrassment that they suspect me of speaking Peruvian and that only politeness compels them to understand me. (146)

Zilia subverts and questions not only the French culture in which she finds herself, but the very use the French make of their own language. Furthermore, although Zilia might seem to be in better hands with the French, and to have been "freed" from the Spanish, realistically Déterville is as close a keeper of her captivity as the Spanish ever were. Even her tongue is enslaved–at least until she can learn the language–for Déterville teaches her to repeat the words "je vous aime" and "je vous promets d'être à vous" (48) before she

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[85] Frustrated at the wasted effort of attempting to understand and be understood, at one point while still on the Spanish ship Zilia closes her eyes and refuses to open them to alleviate her feelings of helplessness. However, she finds that "being shut up inside myself only made my anxieties keener and the desire to express them more urgent" (35). Even though in this same letter (IV) Zilia claims, "I no longer live in myself or for myself. Every instant in which I draw breath is a sacrifice I make for love of you" (34), what she betrays in describing her need to express herself is that she lives not, as she claims, for love of Aza, but out of a desire to express her innermost thoughts. The confusion she creates here is caused by her need for an audience which will understand her writing–and the only audience she can imagine is the one for whom alone (ostensibly, if not in fact) she was writing just before her capture. She even admits that the writing she does only serves as an illusion, that it tricks her into believing that she is speaking to Aza (36).

can hope to understand their meaning. Her tongue speaks his pleasure and, although he does not "violate" her in the carnal sense, these words are "new chains" (172) until she is able to find the linguistic key and discard them.

Zilia's real drama, then, as Kavanagh observes, "turns less on her relation to Aza than on her achievement, within a new language and a new culture, of expressivity without complicity–on her resistance, as she uses French, to being redefined by it" (Kavanagh 144). Once Zilia learns French, she is able to negotiate her own meanings for words, and eventually Déterville, native speaker though he is, has to ask Zilia to translate her use of his own language: "expliquez-moi," he pleads, "quel sens vous attaches à ses mots adorables: *je vous aime*" (95). Zilia's response is lucid, clear and subtle:[86] "ces mots doivent, je crois, vous faire entendre que vous m'êtes cher, que votre sort m'intéresse, que l'amitié et la reconnaissance m'attachent à vous; ces sentiments plaisent à mon coeur et doivent satisfaire le vôtre" (95). And yet when Déterville asks her to clarify further, to explain what she feels for Aza, her response is that "le sentiment que j'ai pour Aza est tout différent de ceux que j'ai pour vous, c'est ce que vous appelez l'amour . . ." (95).

The differences here are stunning and highly evocative. First, the distinction Zilia draws is between a verb (*aimer*) and a noun (*amour*). The noun, associated with Aza and thus with her Peruvian self, indicates a static state, giving it the power to anchor her, while locating itself temporally in the past through its lack of movement. In contrast, the verb, associated with Déterville and thus with Zilia's new life in France, gives by its status as a

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[86] It is also issued with confident authority, as the translation illustrates: "these words must, I believe, make you hear that you are dear to me . . ."

verb the sense of movement from the present into the future. Furthermore, the very meaning of the verb *aimer* gives it a native ambiguity: the English translations are both "to like" and "to love." Thus the verb itself is liminal, allowing the speaker to express either of these sentiments, or even both at once. Here, Zilia is able to use her liminal position between cultures and languages to rewrite the script that Déterville has already given her to speak.

Suellen Diaconoff notes that "when Zilia is forced to master the language of the masters, she speaks from a position of 'betwixt and between', for she speaks the language of the majority, without being *of* the majority, and is able to look from the outside in and the inside out. . . . If her letters were originally motivated out of isolation and a thwarted love relationship, they rapidly cease being vehicles primarily of romance, to become processes of self-invention through differentiation" (Diaconoff 901). The differentiation is not absolute, however, for Zilia's use of French is accurate though absolutely literal. What she does not commit to is the idiom, nor does she allow the French culture to dictate the way she uses the language. Although she is able to speak French, the fact that she insists upon speaking in translation means that her audience's comprehension is always less than perfect. Thus her writing is always directed toward a utopian audience, but one that does not preclude the hope of final comprehension. Hope (and desire), then, has been re-"delineated," taken out of the control of another individual and thus beyond the possibility of "abandonment," and the love relationship is replaced by the far more stable intellectual friendship.

If this friendship is the refuge of ill fated love ("le seul asile de l'amour infortuné"

(158)), then it too sits, at least in this text, in a liminal position. Although not Déterville's longed for "amour," the complex "amitié" gives Zilia a between-space to inhabit since she cannot go back to Peru (or Aza) and refuses to accept the total assimilation marriage to Déterville would entail. She tells Déterville, "[i]t is in vain that you would flatter yourself to think that you can make my heart take on new chains. The betrayal of my trust does not undo my oaths" (172). She may abjure her passion for Aza, but the bonds that hold her to him–and these would be cultural bonds, and no longer those of sentiment, for she calls them "sacrés"–will not allow her to place her passion elsewhere.[87]

But the nature of Zilia's passion, and the actual identity of its object, have always lurked beneath the veneer of her loving addresses to Aza. Altman argues that Zilia and Aza are equals raised to rule together, and thus even their original relationship lacked the hierarchy associated with most masculine-feminine dyads. She suggests that "[i]n fact, Aza was never the source of enlightenment for Zilia. His occasionally fiery but always warming glance simply provided the stimulating, challenging, and supportive environment in which she arduously acquired an education from the same tutors who tutored him" (Altman, "Graffigny's Epistemology": 190). However, the linguistic forces at work in the narrative seem to indicate that their initial relationship amplifies the "traditional" gender influenced

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[87] C. Bruce Cameron suggests that Zilia is not only kept captive by Déterville, but that she "remains a captive to her original and inexhaustible love for Aza" (Cameron 44). However, when she uses the language of captivity to explain her relative state, she refers to Déterville's attempts to win her amorous affection as attempts to "make [her] heart take on *new* chains." (166, emphasis added). This suggests two things. First, the use of "new" implies that although she now regards the ties that bound her to Aza as imprisoning, she considers them *old* chains, and places them firmly in the past. Second, Zilia recognizes the power relationship that a male-female dyad creates, and is unwilling to enter a relationship wherein she will inevitably be the subordinate party again.

power imbalance, and that only when Zilia recreates Aza in the image she requires does the power balance slowly shift. Perhaps the best measure of this shift comes from the epithets with which Zilia endows Aza over the course of her captivity. He begins as the soul and pillar of her life, and the arbiter of her existence, but as the text progresses these epithets subtly change. As early as letter III Aza is addressed as "dear idol of my heart" (32), suggesting his position as a symbolic placeholder rather than an actual person, and although he is still "master of her soul" he is now also "the Sun of her days," epithets which, although they clearly recognize his authority, distance his rule somewhat. From arbiter of her existence he is demoted to arbiter of her days (41), and from the sun of her days to the light of them (58).

Perhaps most telling is that after the midway point of the novel, these epithets disappear entirely, signaling a continuing and completing of Zilia's disengagement from Aza. And yet the process is certainly not of simple estrangement, but rather of transformation or even recognition of Aza as not one type of audience but another: not a beloved and separate individual but a constructed audience created to facilitate the writing process by helping to stabilize the location of voice.[88] The word "audience" here seems to

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[88] When Clifton Cherpack notes that *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* "contains criticism of France from the point of view of an exotic foreigner and also stresses the tortures of love and separation, although Zilia, the heroine, ultimately comes to admire French civilization and to prefer the cultivation of the mind to the vicissitudes of passion" (Cherpack 147-48), he touches on an interesting dichotomy in the novel. Déterville, as the dominant masculine presence (rather than the dominant absence, as Aza is) takes the role of passionate lover to extremes, nearly losing his faculties of reason, whereas Zilia, although her passion for Aza is ardent, is able to function quite rationally even in his absence, and is well fulfilled with friendship when that absence becomes permanent. The belief in the emotional instability of women and "natives" is, in this novel, shaken to its core, and it should really come as no surprise that Zilia in the end refuses to marry

be key. The economy of desire in this text is far more linked to that of artist-audience than it is to that of woman-man. Thus rather than needing to rely on the authorization of men in order to have access to speech, what Graffigny describes here with her absent audience is the possibility of writing from within, to within–without needing permission, with even desire focused inward to form a hermetic but hardly unified subject-system, which is saved from solipsism by the utopian audience which is always in essence imagined and absent when writing takes place, but which becomes both present and material upon publication. The combination of her culturally liminal position and her perennial role as translator come together finally in the architecture of her permanent residence in the country.

Zilia's country house has inspired a great deal of critical comment, and for good reason. Erin Isikoff argues that Déterville's house "offers Zilia coverture, protection, shelter, because he intends that she await him there, as a virgin awaits her husband, just as she awaited Aza in the Temple of the Sun. If Zilia takes shelter in a home built by Déterville, then her position under his domestic protectorate is equivalent to the legal position of the wife" (Isikoff 21). However, this in itself seems to be as much an over-

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Déterville. Her own passion and dependency–illusory as it is–teach her two things. The first of these is exactly that her dependency on an individual is illusory. She has no need of Aza's actual presence (or absence) to engage her voice; her own subjectivity is not derivative but primary. Second, this same illusory need inflames passions so great that they subvert not only her voice but her will, her purpose, and her very subjectivity. The danger of this is extreme, since the illusion is so fragile. Thus the replacement of the emotionally charged figure of Aza not with a new focus of passion (Déterville) but with the neutral and non-specific "audience" that a published work assumes stabilizes Zilia's locus of speech. The fact that even before this change Zilia's audience is an imaginary construction allows her to subsume the masculine/feminine binary and transcend its power dynamic, at least to some extent.

reading as that of which Isikoff accuses Miller. Zilia's words and her clear and well articulated desires and limits where Déterville is concerned suggest that no matter what legal status into which Déterville may or may not intend to force her, and regardless of what cultural expectations French society might have where her behaviour is concerned, Zilia rejects all of these things over and over, vocally and out-of-hand. Why would she enter into a relationship she has already noted is reciprocal only at the moment of its celebration? No matter how *we* may read the country house Déterville buys for her (with, it should be noted, her own money), what is most important is how *Zilia* reads the country house. And clearly she reads it as her own, and completely independent of any obligations to Déterville beyond simple thanks. There is no indication that her "acceptance of Déterville's action can only mean her acceptance of legal subordination to him, her acceptance of his hand in marriage" (Isikoff 21).

The architecture of the country house expresses a distinct relationship to the liminality of Zilia's own subject position, and her constant need to translate between cultures. Carol Sherman notes that "the heroine functions neither as daughter nor as parent, and she escapes being a wife as well. In other words, she is not coded biologically and is defined neither by kinship nor by instrumental function other than that of creating herself" (Sherman 272). Certainly in social terms Zilia sits in a liminal space as she skirts all the traditional feminine roles; what Graffigny creates for her, in effect, is as much a utopian situation as what Cavendish creates, with less obviously fantastic embellishments. Sherman argues that because "she no longer has a society," Zilia is able to "act on her own terms, as both free from role-determinisms and as attached to her friends" (Sherman 273).

However, the suggestion that Zilia has no society might perhaps be an overstatement—or an understatement. The very blueprint of her country house suggests that in fact she has not none but two; her ability to act on her own terms stems from her involvement in both cultures and from her privileged position in a liminal space between the two. Of particular interest are the two adjacent rooms: the new "Temple of the Sun" and the library.

Although Downing points out that what occurs only comes about through Déterville's clever stagecraft, the end result of Zilia becoming owner of a country estate, and in particular of the closet temple, is that "[t]he single reference point to which Zilia's discourse referred and upon which it rested–Aza, or the Sun–has been resolutely displaced. No longer at the horizon of the system of values proclaimed throughout the novel, the Peruvian temple of the Sun has been incorporated into Zilia's estate in the French countryside" (Downing 64). Fascinatingly, when Zilia first sets up her own shrine (with the same artifacts that are later moved to the new house), she explains clearly exactly what each piece signifies for her and, while she worships the image of the sun, prostrating herself before it, she sets the golden chair which she claims symbolizes Aza's grandeur and rank off to one side. It is this chair which later "disappears" and is turned into coin in order to allow her to live in solitude in the country as she wishes, just as, in a sense, it is Aza's absence that allows her to negotiate her way into her new subjectivity.

But the incorporation of the "Temple of the Sun" comes, Downing argues, at a cost. He suggests that the religious icons have been reduced to mere museum pieces, and that even the Peruvian sun exists only in representative form in Zilia's "closet." There is a sense in Downing's and many other critics's assessments that the new "Temple du Soleil"

somehow trivializes a belief system, transforming it into a mere collection of artifacts. Roulston, for example, describes the chamber as an "extravagant museum piece," and suggests that the temple "functions as a representation, as image rather than substance" (Roulston 323), and Isikoff suggests that the room with the Inca treasures "miniaturizes and contains" the religious system of the temple of the sun. However, what the new "Temple" really seems to do is invert the power structure within which Zilia had been living in Peru. Rather than having the temple contain her (as she complains, at one point, that it did: "Enclosed in the temple from tenderest childhood, I was not acquainted with the beauties of the universe. What a good thing I had been missing!" (60)), she—or her estate—now contains the temple. Although Dobie suggests that perhaps the secret "closet" indicates a culture which has been "conquered and dismantled and later reconstituted as decor or fetish" (Dobie 216), Zilia's continued dedication to her culture belies this. Furthermore, the adjacent well-stocked library contains the emblems of the "religion" of the enlightenment, philosophy, so that what Zilia ends up with is an enveloping position of power which subsumes both cultures and creates a liminal position from which to relate to both.

Wolfgang remarks that the two rooms, the library and the Temple of the Sun, provide an "architectural metaphor for the separate spheres contained in the novel." Although both the "outer consideration of the universe of the scholar and the inner reflection of the letter writer are affirmed by Graffigny as essential," she says, the two rooms are "nonetheless quite apart" (Wolfgang 27). While Wolfgang goes on to emphasize the separateness that this architecture creates, it is important also to note that

Zilia, who inhabits both rooms and uses both ideologies in the production of her text, seems to be able to draw from both rooms at once. The rooms are separate, but adjacent, and she and her text seem to stand in the doorway between. Her successful negotiation of the liminal space between them allows her to build a unique and distinctive subjectivity–and gives her a location from which to voice it.

Downing remarks that

> [t]he house in the country not only defines a new use for the relics of the temple, but more importantly it allows Zilia to redefine and reconstruct her own identity. Zilia can come into being once her past has been contained and thus disposed of in the collection, once her former self has appeared in representation on the wall of the "cabinet" . . . . Once she has left this other Zilia behind through the distance of representation, she is able to set up an independent life for herself because she is no longer exclusively attached to Peruvian cosmology or to Aza as the origin and end of all value. (Downing 66)

However, this seems somewhat too sudden and too simple for what the text offers leading up to this point. It seems rather that in the course of learning to write and of learning the new culture, Zilia has already relocated herself in relation to the old; this is why the sudden removal of the possibility of Aza's presence in physical form does not completely destroy her. And rather than locking the Peruvian self away, Zilia brings elements of this self forward, aligning them with the qualities of French culture, and placing the result in full public view.

In the end, the position of landmark and anchor Aza holds is filled instead by an idea that spans the gap between the culture of Peru and the philosophy of the enlightenment; Zilia dedicates herself to virtue: "I render homage not in any way to a simulacrum of virtue but to virtue itself, and I will always take it for my actions' judge and

guide. I dedicate my life to it, and my heart to friendship" (170-71). In this acute appraisal of her changing focus, Zilia's use of the word "simulacrum" signals her recognition of the constructed nature of "Aza" as audience. In taking virtue as her guide, Zilia provides herself with a topic that is itself liminal in that it can be both private and public, active and inactive. In addition, by clinging to virtue, Zilia eschews the high emotion involved in romantic love, and turns instead to moral and ethical values held in the Peru of her past, which she hopes to establish in the France of her future.

Fourny claims that "*Lettres d'une Péruvienne* remains a disturbing, unresolved text in many respects precisely for the autobiographical 'je' that is bound not only to a fictional identity but also to a fictional solution: the illusion of independence and autonomy achieved through the abstraction of self from social reality" (Fourny 238). And yet to claim that "Zilia . . . gives primacy to the private sphere rather than seeking integration into the public sphere of power" (Fourny 238) is to minimize the fact that Zilia's work in this isolation, her writing, is wholly tied up in communicating with others. It also dismisses the very real and courageous act of publication–both on the part of Zilia and on that of her creator.

David Macy answers Undank's question "Does Zilia find a room and a language of her own, or is she sucked into the wistful, tropological paradise of her own and her author's imagination?" (Undank 307) by asserting that the answer "is more complex than the question suggests. Zilia does find a room and a language of her own, but they exist only in the imagination. . . . the assumed point of reference no longer exists in the 'real' world. Knowing what she knows of the French, Zilia cannot accept their way of life, but

she has nowhere to go upon rejecting it except into solitude" (Macey 181). Perhaps, but even so, this is an incomplete solitude. Like Rowlandson, she is forced to live in two different cultures at once, but the increased fictionality of Zilia's position allows a greater flexibility in the outcome. Zilia does not need to remain an active part of either culture, as Rowlandson does. In the end, she chooses to remain Peruvian in France, and places her private voice in the public domain.

At the end of her reading of the novel, Ksenya Kiebuzinski offers this evocative statement: "Perhaps then it was more than just Zilia's denial of marriage that caused Graffigny's critics to find the novel implausible, but also the heroine's articulate resistance to complete assimilation" (Kiebuzinski 131). Although it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the responses to Graffigny's novel sufficiently to support or refute this statement entirely, the novel itself certainly seems to confirm that Zilia's work through writing is to resist the very culture whose language she uses as a tool of resistance. Zilia clearly shows the ability to resist the power of this symbolic system, and the even more important ability to recreate it to satisfy her own needs.

Sarah Fielding's *Ophelia*: Marriage, Female Separatism, and the Problem with Paradise

Sarah Fielding, sister of the famous Henry and close friend of Samuel Richardson, is not nearly so well known as either her literary brother or his arch-rival. However, she writes in a way that shows the influence of both Richardson's sentimentalism and Henry's irreverent comedy, and it comes as no surprise that her best known novel, *David Simple*, is the one that most resembles the works of her brother. But Sarah Fielding was also a literary innovator, and her experiments with the novel genre are worthy of more attention than they have been given. Although not as *avant garde* as *The Cry*,[89] and written for a wider market, Fielding's *Ophelia* draws from a huge number of genres which are simultaneously integrated, confused, and disrupted, reproducing in the reader the experience of the title character, kept off balance and on guard by the need to deal with the limitations placed upon her by the world into which she is abducted. Through the several abductions of Ophelia, as well as the interpolated tales (which also take captivity as their topic), Fielding explores a wide range of social, economic, and physical pressures which combine to place women in strictly defined roles whose boundaries they are not permitted to cross. Although the narrative of *Ophelia* allows, at some points, the transgression of some of these boundaries even as it describes them, in the end it suggests that the place "betwixt and between" where Zilia comes to rest is not in an idyllic pastoral

[89] Fielding's *The Cry* is a "dramatic fable" that uses a chorus of voices called "the Cry" as a kind of judicial body which the main character of the tale can address directly.

utopia but rather somewhere between Scylla and Charybdis: between a deathly voicelessness and the agony of unfulfilled desire.

In *Ophelia*, the social critique founded in the allegorical world of the cross-cultural captive typified by Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* not only becomes much more direct but also changes its focus slightly. Rather than having to negotiate an identity incorporating a lost but idealized culture while irrevocably immersed in one that is clearly flawed (as Zilia must), the eponymous heroine of *Ophelia* is forced to negotiate (and ultimately choose) between an insulated and insular but safe life with her aunt and an integrated but dangerous existence with her lover. This choice is made more complex by the fact that life with her aunt in the isolation of Wales seems so fulfilling that Ophelia experiences no desire. Without desire, her character has no need for speech, and simply parrots or uncritically accepts the opinions and dictums of her aunt. As a result, Ophelia has no identifiable individual voice and no speaking position in Wales, and in fact her very selfhood seems amorphously attached to and wholly dependant upon her aunt. In contrast, the arrival (and departure) of Dorchester, and later Ophelia's abduction by him, introduce her to a desire so profound as to be almost physically incapacitating. Ophelia's desire, although it brings her irrevocably into self-awareness and enables her to find and exercise an independent subject position, causes her such profound discomfort that death seems almost preferable. The importance of this complex dance of desire and death is further emphasized by the fact that not only the heroine but the entire novel takes its name from Shakespeare's famous character, a character whose fate epitomizes the tragic hopelessness of a woman caught between desire and death, and the unavoidable conflict such a position

entails.

The fact that Ophelia marries her captor at the end of the novel suggests (at least at first glance) a fairly traditional comic ending, in contrast to the desperate fate of Shakespeare's character. The apparent conservatism this kind of conclusion generally indicates is supported by the fact that the story offers a critique of feminine separatism, that is, of an enclosed, segregated and self-supporting all-female community. Portions of the narrative involving Ophelia and her aunt as they live in the isolation of Wales suggest that the "closed circuit" produced by life in isolation with only an ideal audience stifles and suffocates the position from which speech may occur at least as effectively as life in the "civilized" world can. However, the social and political motivation of the text does not end here. A further exploration of Ophelia's acceptance of Dorchester's marriage proposal and the way in which their union comes about critiques the kind of integration into the London culture Ophelia's decision to marry apparently endorses. In the end, this text resists its comic closure and becomes more closely allied with the kind of tragedy it is quite possible to read–from a twenty-first century perspective at least–into Kate's fate in Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*. Although Fielding's novel charts the process of Ophelia's burgeoning awareness of her individual subjectivity and her subsequent attempts to gain control of her voice, Ophelia really speaks clearly and for herself alone only in the bitterly ironic subtext of her acceptance of Dorchester's hand in marriage. The first hints of the complexity of this layered social commentary come from the structural presentation of the novel itself.

I. Illusion and the Epistolary Format

Written as a single extended personal letter, framed by two separate introductory notes (one by the "author" of the letter–presumably Ophelia herself–and the other by the "publisher" of the manuscript–the "Author of David Simple") *Ophelia* details the life and adventures of the title character up to her marriage. The text opens with Ophelia's birth and the concurrent deaths of both her parents, as a result of which she is placed in the care of her aunt. This aunt secretly marries, and then openly begins to live with her husband, thus destroying her reputation. She follows her husband to the "American Islands" of the Caribbean, where the marriage effectively enacts Zilia's indictment of marriage in the French culture:[90] Ophelia's aunt finds that her husband is not only unfaithful but a bigamist, and that he has squandered not only her own money, but Ophelia's inheritance as well, until only £500 remains. As a result of this experience, the aunt "determine[s] to fly all human Kind" (1.11), and to this end packs up Ophelia and the rest of what is left of her belongings and retreats to a remote cottage in Wales, where she attempts to "protect" Ophelia by raising her in complete isolation. This isolation is interrupted fifteen years later by the arrival of Lord Dorchester, who has been touring the countryside, and later by this same Dorchester's abduction of Ophelia, initiating the first of her captivities and the event which launches the main part of the narrative.

The first of the two introductory pieces that frame the novel, an "Advertisement" by "The Author of *David Simple*," seeks to defend the "editor's" publication of the work

[90] See above p. 121-22; see also *Letters of a Peruvian Woman* p.149.

by removing her from the role of author by several degrees, claiming that the manuscript was found in the drawer of an "old Buroe [bureau]."[91] This "Advertisement" as well as the "Introduction" by the "author" of the letter herself both emphasize the same "female modesty and humility" and "air of special pleading that accepted the premise that female writers should be judged by less stringent standards than male." They both also offer "the suggestion that a gentlewoman publishing a book had to defend her actions" (Bree 8). However, as Linda Bree suggests in her introduction to *David Simple*, the stringent restrictions placed on public authorship in, for example, Margaret Cavendish's time, have been to some extent removed by the time of *Ophelia*'s publication. Although there is still some censure associated with writing as an occupation where women are concerned, writing and publication are no longer coterminous with looseness, or a failure to observe "proper" behaviour which could involve sexual availability. The stigma publication might have produced has been mitigated by the sense, given by the publication of this very volume, that *all* writing might quite easily end up published–even private letters lost in the drawer of an old bureau. As with Graffigny's text, the message here is that even personal letters should be written with the possibility of publication in mind, for if they are perchance found in a bureau drawer, and the finder identifies them as sufficiently "well

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[91] Peter Sabor notes that *Ophelia* "is the only one of her novels to use, on the title page, the phrase '*Published by the Author of David Simple*,' rather than merely 'by the author of David Simple', and in doing so it raises teasing questions: is Fielding the author or merely the editor, and in what sense has she 'Published' the book? It is likewise the only one of her novels containing the prefatory ploy of denying her own authorship . . . . The device enables her to commend her own work without fear of appearing immodest" (Sabor 1).

calculated for Instruction," then not to publish them would seem a great moral failing.[92]

This sentiment is underlined by the fact that, epistolary structure notwithstanding, the "private" nature of this particular letter is always in question. Not only does the single letter (which the narrator frequently and intrusively reminds us *is* a letter) run to two octavo volumes and some 557 pages, even the "publisher's" framing "Advertisement" declares that "if the story is fictitious, in all Probability, it must have been destined for the press" since no one would "put their Invention on so laborious a Task, merely for their own Amusement." That this is indeed a work of fiction becomes more likely as various events, such as Dorchester's two hour blazonic admiration of Ophelia's self-admittedly ridiculous overadornment of herself, strain credulity to the breaking point. As well, Peter Sabor notes that "[s]tretching the boundaries of realism beyond their limits, Fielding asks us to accept that in fifteen years of rural seclusion, between the ages of two to seventeen, Ophelia meets not a single human being" (Sabor 3). The clearly fantastic content of the story, combined with the obviously contrived nature of the "personal letter," raises the question of why the epistolary form is used at all. The answer may lie not only in the distance it allows between author and narrator, or in the "excuse" for writing something as self-indulgent as a personal memoir, but also in the latitude and instability the form allows as it teeters on the edge of private and public, fiction and non fiction.

The second framing piece, the "Introduction" (ostensibly written by Ophelia

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[92] "The Author of David Simple" asserts somewhat defensively that these new and entertaining "Adventures" are "as well calculated for Instruction as Amusement," but the "instructions" although the novel gives its audience are not really conducive to what might be defined as proper morals for young ladies.

herself), consists of an address to "her Ladyship," who has apparently ordered Ophelia to write her life's story. This artifice of presenting the novel as an apparently private letter not only holds the main narrative together while it develops, it actually involves itself in the process and from time to time makes itself intrusively visible. The importance of the frame's role not in the actual narrative plot but in the countervailing subversive tendencies inherent in this apparently conservative work becomes clear even in this introduction, where the complaining first-person narrator, Ophelia, reluctantly concedes that "Your Ladyship's" commands "can meet with nothing but an implicit Obedience from [her]." The possibility of inescapable textual authority residing in a feminine rather than a masculine figure undermines at the outset any suggestions of absolute masculine authority or the need for masculine permission in order to write and publish. However, although this might seem a subversive assertion, its power is neutralized by the fact that Ophelia no more controls her own voice here than she controls her situation while a captive of Lord Dorchester. Not only does "her Ladyship" dictate the content of the tale, she prescribes the manner in which Ophelia relates it–a manner that forces Ophelia's reluctant return to the naivety and ignorance of her life before capture, as Ophelia insists: "You expressly desire to know the Impressions I received from the first View of Customs so unlike what I had ever seen, at a Time when they are become so familiar to me, that I almost forget many of them were ever otherwise."

The power dynamic in this complicated and exclusively feminine framing relationship between Ophelia and "her Ladyship" introduces the possibility that one of the purposes of this narrative might be to discredit the female separatism promoted by such

works as *Millennium Hall*[93] (and illustrated by Graffigny in Zilia's retreat to near-isolation in the country) as an option for the development of a position from which a woman can speak. In fact, Fielding's *Ophelia* essentially responds to the world view represented in *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*, particularly where it touches Zilia's isolationist solution to her vexed position in French society. Although Dorchester's capture of Ophelia and his obvious desire to bed her are clearly indebted to Richardson's *Clarissa*, the parallels between *Ophelia* and Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* are striking as well.[94] Ophelia and Zilia share an all-female cultural situation prior to their captivities; they are both violently removed from their seclusion by "savage nobles"; they both critique the new surroundings they find themselves in as naive travelers in a foreign land.[95] They both fall ill and "float" in a fevered state in order to buffer themselves from their situation, and they

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[93] Sarah Scott's *Millennium Hall* (1762) describes an isolationist all-female community founded by upper-class women where even poor and disabled women are taken in and the women support each other–although class boundaries are in the end preserved.

[94] The early translation of *Lettres* into English, Fielding's probable knowledge of French (given her status) and the tremendous popularity of Graffigny's work combine to make it at least plausible that Fielding had read Graffigny's novel. Both the permanent change brought on by the need to adjust to a new milieu and the ways in which it is described speak of the connections between this narrative and its heroine's situation to the position of Zilia in *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*.

[95] In order to stress the strangeness of the landscape (both human and environmental), which in turn emphasizes the notion of Ophelia as a captive in a strange place (a notion which requires a great deal of emphasis, since Ophelia was in fact born in and shares a language with the society to which she is abducted), the narrative refers continually to England as "that Country" or "A Country" or even, as Ophelia addresses Dorchester, "your Kingdom." She even refers to the place she is taken to as "a new World," which can be read as a reference to America. In addition, she refers to the people around her as "the *English*" even though she herself belongs to this category and has since birth (1. 47).

are both compelled to find ways to raise their voices from within the captivities in which they find themselves. However, *Ophelia* effectively critiques the isolationist solution Zilia adopts to being a permanent outsider immersed in a foreign culture, underlining the dangers and difficulties inherent in speaking exclusively to an utopian audience. Although Zilia does not retreat into the "comfortable madness" of refusing to realize she has left Peru permanently, she does retreat to a place where she is fully comfortable, divorcing herself from the culture she finds so uncomfortable and declaring it irrelevant. In *Ophelia*, Fielding explores the limitations of this strategy and the effect such an artificially created comfort has on the ability to speak. However, Ophelia's contrasting approach of embracing her captor's culture and assimilating herself entirely into it is also critiqued and revealed as dangerous, as the sustained (if subtle) critique of marriage shows. In fact, in this text, as well as marking the dangers inherent in Zilia's choice, we can see the possible outcome of Aza's,[96] and examine just how much agency he may or may not have had in the choosing of it.

II. Discomfort, Desire, and the Trouble with Paradise

It is interesting to note that prior to her abduction, we never hear Ophelia's voice in direct quotations; only after Ophelia experiences desire does she speak directly, rather than as an adjunct to another character. An explanation for this may be found in an

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[96] Although the absence of complicating racial factors does simplify the scenario somewhat.

examination of how Ophelia's situation resonates with that of some of her mythological forbears. While the roots of the mythological base upon which Zilia builds her identity are Peruvian (although even she is reluctant to admit to what extent she has grown away from them), the roots of the mythologies operating in Ophelia's universe are those which underwrite Western culture: Hebraic and Hellenic. Most specifically, *Ophelia* shows the influence of Milton's interweaving of these two mythological systems in *Paradise Lost*, a text which would have exposed Fielding to a reading of the fall of humanity as a fall into self-awareness.

The connection between the biblical Eden (especially Milton's adaptation of it) and the various new "Edens" in *Ophelia* works itself out in several ways. When life becomes insupportable in the "American Islands," and the aunt finds her "blasted reputation" unrecoverable, she tries to find a new Eden, a place incorrupt and far from the "sin" her passion has caused her to commit. Thus she looks for a place away from human (and most specifically male) contact. The narrative makes a concerted attempt to present the Eden of Wales in terms familiar to its readers, taking for its descriptive ancestors both Milton's Eden and the tracts promoting the settlement of America–tracts from which Milton himself borrows some of his rhetoric.

Paul Stevens notes that "[t]he rector of [All Hallows parish, Bread Street, London] in 1626 was Samuel Purchas, whose great collection of colonizing voyages, *Purchas his Pilgrimes*, Milton combed through for his history of Russia and is said to have planned to abridge" (Stevens 1996: 9). In addition, Milton's description of Eden essentially echoes Robert Johnson's colonial tract entitled *Nova Britannia.* Johnson's 1609 tract describes

the Americas as "this earthly Paradice" (8), and adds, "There are valleyes and plaines streaming with sweete Springs, like veynes in a naturall bodie . . . the soile is strong and lustie of its own nature, and sendeth out fruitful Vines running vpon trees" (11). Milton's description of Paradise uses the same kinds of rhetoric:

> Southward through Eden went a river large,
> Nor changed his course, but through the shaggy hill
> Passed underneath engulfed, for God had thrown
> That mountain as his garden mould high raised
> Upon the rapid current, which through veins
> Of porous earth with kindly thirst up drawn,
> Rose a fresh fountain, and with many a rill
> Watered the garden . . . (*Paradise Lost* 4. 223-31)

and Ophelia's description of Wales is almost eerily similar:

> my Aunt's romantic Despair led her into *Wales*, where she found a small Cottage situated on the Side of a Hill, commanding a beautiful, though a wild and mountainous Prospect; at the Foot of the Hill was a delightful Valley, to which, from our Cottage, we were led by a fine Grove of Trees; on the Side of the Grove ran a clear Brook, with several small cascades intermixed, descending into the Valley, where it flowed in beautiful Meanders, till it lost itself in a little Wood. (1. 10)[97]

Ophelia even presents her Aunt, to some extent, as the "new Adam," giving her control and care of the animals and citing their relationship with her in almost biblical terms. "When the former inhabitants left he Place," Ophelia notes, "and my Aunt saw nothing about her but the Animals to whom she was to give her Care and Attendance, and from

[97] Robert Mountgomry, who describes Carolina in his 1717 tract as "our future *Eden*" (4), notes its location as "in the same Latitude with *Palestine* Herself, that promis'd *Canaan*, which was pointed out by *God's* own choice, to bless the Labours of a favourite People" (6), and grandly announces that "*Paradise* with all her Virgin Beauties, may be modestly suppos'd at most but equal to its Native Excellencies" (6). He then describes the area in terms reminiscent of Milton's Eden and prescient of Ophelia's description of Wales: "The Ground lies sloping towards the River, but, at a Distance rises gradually, and intermingles like Hills of Wood with fruitful Plains, all covered with wild Flowers" (7).

whom she was to receive the grateful Return of Support and Sustenance, except myself, then as ignorant of Evil, and almost as Dumb as they" (1. 11-12).

There is also a striking parallel between Milton's Eve and Ophelia in Wales. In her ignorance of evil (connected directly to a "dumbness," a lack of speech, which is in turn connected to something beneath the human–a lack of awareness of self) Ophelia becomes linked to the first glimpses that Milton gives us of Eve and her confusion about her identity, as she wakes for the first time since being created and silently wonders "where / And what" she is (*Paradise Lost* 4. 451-2). The connection between Ophelia and Eve is borne out in striking terms when Ophelia describes herself: "my Hair was extremely long, and curled naturally, for I knew no Art, and fell in Ringlets about my Neck, reaching behind below the Middle of my Waist, and in some Places incroaching on my Forehead, enough to set off my Complexion by the Contrast, without hiding the shape of it" (1. 42).[98]

The similarities go beyond these superficial descriptions, however. Milton's Eve's recounting of her creation reveals an innate weakness as she finds herself unable to draw away from her own reflection in a pool of water: "there I had fixed / Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire, / Had [God's] voice not warned me" (*Paradise Lost* 4. 465-66). Satan exploits this vanity as he flatters her in both her disturbing dream (*Paradise*

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[98] Compare Milton's description of Eve:

> She as a veil down to the slender waist
> Her unadorned golden tresses wore
> Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved
> As the vine curls her tendrils . . . (*Paradise Lost* 4. 304-7)

Lost 5. 41-47) and in the fall itself (*Paradise Lost* 9. 531-48) where Milton specifically notes the effect of the flattery: "So glozed the tempter, and his proem tuned; / Into the heart of Eve his words made way" (*Paradise Lost* 9. 549-50). Ophelia needs no Miltonic narrator to point out her weakness; she gestures to it herself:

> Though I had not, till Lord *Dorchester* broke in upon my solitude, ever received a grain of Flattery; yet mere Nature and Constitution had given me a little Vanity, without the Benefit of Comparison, unable to soothe my Fancy with excelling Multitudes, since I had never beheld them, yet in a Degree I was vain: Nature alone suffices to make us so; . . . I complimented myself on my Humility, in being only reasonably fond of a living Form of delicate and curious Composition, absolutely indifferent to any poor Remains after delicacy of Complexion, symmetry of Features and elegant proportion of Body shall by confounded together in one little Heap of Dust. (1. 57-58)

However much Ophelia claims that her vanity rests in her humility, and not in her "living Form," she finds that the "Ornaments and the Toilette" supplied for her by Dorchester engage not just her attention but her "Affections for some Time" (1. 45) even though she suggests that the view out the window has a more lasting appeal.[99]

The problem with the Miltonic Paradise that the landscape of *Ophelia's* Wales

[99] In a sense, Eve's first encounter with Satan in her troubling dream and Ophelia's first encounter with the visiting Dorchester mirror each other as prefatory incidents which contribute to the eventual falls of both women, in that the flattery used in both cases works on an innate vanity supposedly native to women in general. Thus however hard Ophelia's aunt has tried to remove her charge from the "corrupting" powers of society, it seems that the serpent has entered the garden nonetheless. In spite of Ophelia's emphasis on her own isolation and innocence, when Dorchester first calls to her, "Stay! beauteous Angel, stay!" she is not at all sure whether the "Harmony of his Voice," or, and as the story progresses we find this more likely, the "Sweetness of the flattering Appellation" is the more powerful agent in stopping her flight. Furthermore, although she notes that "I saw him bending towards me in the most suppliant Posture, with Gestures, which I thought almost prophane to address to a Moral Being," she admits that "the Humility was not displeasing" and in fact she notes that "female Vanity" is "the only innate Principle for which I contend" (1. 14).

evokes is that within it Eve's–and Ophelia's–positions *seem* characterized by the lack of an authoritative voice. The benefit of nearly three and a half centuries of critical thought on *Paradise Lost* has illuminated the depth and complexity of the relationships between God, Adam, Eve, and Satan to the point where it is virtually impossible to make unqualified statements about the interactions between any of these characters, and suggests that Milton's own thoughts on the relative power of Eve's voice and her culpability in the fall were equivocal at least. The nature of the universe Raphael describes to Adam is dynamic, as all things both come from and return to God: "O Adam, one almighty is, from whom / All things proceed, and up to him return" (*Paradise Lost* 5. 469-70). This macrocosmic relationship reveals itself as truly "universal" in the poem; the vision of *Paradise Lost* as a whole is of a series of dynamic (though clearly hierarchical) relationships.

Because reason is what makes humanity into the image and likeness of God, the exercise of reason becomes essential in relationships *with* God. This in turn leads to a series of challenges to authority. Although some of these challenges are illusory, it is through them that learning seems to take place. For example, the Son, "subordinate" to the Father, challenges the finality of the fall:

> For should man finally be lost, should man
> Thy creature late so loved, thy youngest son
> Fall circumvented thus by fraud, though joined
> With his own folly? that be from thee far,
> That be far from thee, Father, who art judge
> Of all things made, and judgest only right.
> (*Paradise Lost* 3. 150-55)

The Son argues that without some provision for grace, the "adversary" shall "thus obtain /

His end, and frustrate [God's]," and consequently expose God's goodness and greatness both to "be questioned and blasphemed without defence" (166). The subordination of the Son to God here is illusory, and so is the challenge, since the Son, being God, is already perfect, and thus his challenge is both perfect and a statement of what, after all, is God's will, as he offers himself as a sacrifice. However, the pattern this episode establishes influences all the other relationships in the work. Adam, for example, challenges God's messenger Raphael by expressing doubt about the events surrounding the fall of Satan from Heaven (*Paradise Lost* 5. 554ff). As a result of his imperfect state, unlike the Son, Adam's doubts are unfounded, but his errors serve as the means to greater wisdom, as Raphael responds appropriately to Adam's questioning.

Eve in her turn challenges Adam–and although this is as it should be, Adam's imperfect state causes him to overreact and, unlike God, he mishandles Eve's questioning. The most obvious example of this is when Eve suggests that she and Adam separate in order to more efficiently accomplish their work in the garden. Adam's response is patronizing:

> Well hast thou motioned, well thy thoughts employed
> How we might best fulfil the work which here
> God hath assigned us, nor of me shalt pass
> Unpraised: for nothing lovelier can be found
> In woman, than to study household good,
> And good works in her husband to promote. (*Paradise Lost* 9.229-34)

dismissive:

> The wife, where danger or dishonour lurks,
> Safest and seemliest by her husband stays,
> Who guards her, or with her the worst endures. (267-69)

and even dictatorial, as his insistence on obedience above all, rather than being offered with a rational explanation, comes instead with a curt nine-word synopsis of Raphael's patient narration: "Wouldst thou approve thy constancy, approve / First thy obedience" (9. 367-68).

Although the relationships between the characters in *Paradise Lost* may in fact work with a series of approved challenges to authority which serve to deepen the wisdom of the questioner, and although the fault and blame for the fall may rest as much with Adam's errors in handling Eve's dissent as with Eve's initial disobedience, the clearly derivative nature of Eve's creation, along with Adam's over-assertion of his authority and his patronizing and dismissive tone when Eve voices her opinions, suggests that to Adam at least, unless Eve is in full agreement with him, she is inescapably wrong. Milton, in the end, is a subordinationist; although women should be allowed to question and express doubt, men in the end should be leaders and have final authority on Earth as the Father has in heaven.

Ophelia's aunt's actions mimic Adam's errors, thus strengthening the link between the two texts, as she (albeit more passively) closes down the possibility of Ophelia speaking, as long as their opinions differ. In the lull between Dorchester's departure and his return to abduct her, Ophelia reports:

> I grew pensive; and I remember my Aunt seemed disturbed at it. She endeavoured to amuse my Thoughts, but they were entirely engrossed by the Stranger: Whatever Subject she began, the Conversation was immediately turned to him. I own my former Amusements became less pleasing to me; I found less Attention to what I read, less Joy in the vernal Beauties which before delighted me, and innocently told my Aunt the Change I felt . . . (1. 25)

For the first time, Ophelia has something to say which does not simply parrot her aunt's convictions, and for the first time, Ophelia has become aware of a separate agenda–her own–and her desire to pursue it. Dorchester has introduced a lack where before there was only satiation,[100] and for the first time, Ophelia has become aware of herself. Her aunt's reaction is to disable this independent line of thinking as quickly as possible: "with a Melancholy, though a gentle forgiving Air, [she] said, 'she perceived her Company was not so sufficient to my Happiness, as mine was to hers'" (1.25),[101] which has the desired effect of rendering Ophelia "silent on the subject" (1.26). The suppression of Ophelia's and Eve's voices certainly makes their respective paradises seem far less paradisaical. An examination of a related mythological captivity narrative–that of Persephone's abduction by Hades–in conjunction with the apparently voiceless position of Ophelia and Eve in their "Edens," serves to illuminate an interesting rewriting in *Ophelia* of the idea of the "fortunate fall."

Eve seems a captive of her subordinate and derivative position by the very nature of her creation, but Persephone's captivity happens, we might say, in the usual way. Although Fielding makes no explicit allusions to the Persephone myth, Milton is

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[100] Once Dorchester–a Satanic figure by virtue of his bringing trouble into Paradise–appears, pays court to, flatters, and fawns on Ophelia, her tranquility is broken and "corruption" sets in. Although Lissette Carpenter suggests that "Fielding's Ophelia, a 'female noble savage', in a Miranda-like scene, discovers the beauty of the wandering Lord Dorchester and is innocently pleased with his flatteries and obeisance" (Carpenter 223), even before he has carried her off, the signs of distinctly non-innocent discomfort and dissatisfaction are evident in the form of vanity.

[101] This echoes the compromise with which Milton's Adam hopes to placate Eve: "but if much converse perhaps / Thee satiate, to short absence I could yield" (*Paradise Lost* 9. 247-48).

instructive inasmuch as the fall of Eve in *Paradise Lost* is itself influenced by the Persephone myth–an influence Milton emphasizes as he links Satan directly to Hades, as well as in his description of Eden as fairer than "that fair field / Of Enna, where Proserpin' gathering flowers / Herself a fairer flower by gloomy Dis / Was gathered" (*Paradise Lost* 4. 268-71). The allusions to this further abduction text confirm and explain the pattern of the "fortunate fall" into consciousness.

As a young girl, Persephone, like Ophelia, lives in an all-female world. She has no definable personality and no particular role except a derivative one both as Demeter's "slender ankled" daughter and as a token of exchange between Zeus, her father, and "Aidoneus," lord of the dead. Her abduction by the god of the underworld and her subsequent descent into Hades mark the beginning of her individuation. As a flower maiden she is simply one among many; her world is in stasis, the growing season continues without interruption or distinction. She has no particular role or function, and in fact is practically indistinguishable from her comrades until she is abducted.[102] Nor are there any myths associated with the half or two thirds of the year when she is above the earth with her mother. In fact, by far the greatest number of references to her and about her are as the dread goddess of the Underworld. Even her name, "Persephone," does not appear in the Homeric "Hymn to Demeter" until she is described as seated on a bed with her new spouse (343), and its roots, *pherein* (to bring) and *phonē* (death), certainly emphasize the link to death that defines her as an individual and gives her a role to play amongst the

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[102] Even in celebrations of her flower-maiden aspect, such as the Eleusinian mysteries and the Thesmophoria, she was referred to not by her name, but merely by the epithet "Kore," or maiden.

gods. Her sense of individuality, and our sense of her as individual, come to the fore only after she has touched death, which here seems to be associated with separation or distinction from life (personified in the life-giving figure of Demeter).

While in Hades, Persephone experiences temptation just as Eve does, and her "fall" into marriage with the God of death also comes from the consumption of fruit–in this case, a pomegranate seed. Persephone's consumption is far more clearly connected to sexuality than Eve's, since it is this act which makes her a wife. However, in both cases desire (for knowledge or carnal satisfaction) is linked firmly to death and through this to burgeoning self-awareness, since to be aware of death or the cessation of the individual self presupposes the awareness of the self as an individual in life.

As Ophelia's initial abductor, Lord Dorchester, carries out his nefarious plan to abduct Ophelia and make her his mistress, the extent to which Ophelia's very identity and sense of individuality (like Persephone's with Demeter and Eve's with Adam) is compromised by her close attachment with her aunt becomes apparent. When Dorchester returns to the cottage and makes his intent to abduct Ophelia clear, the two women fall to their knees and beg for his mercy, but Ophelia's fear has very little to do with her own imminent danger:

> My poor Aunt kept fast hold of me; begged, intreated, and used every argument to prevail on him to let me go; we both kneeled to him, she beseeching his compassion, I joining in the suppliant Posture; but more frightened with the terror in which I saw her, than with any Danger I could apprehend, had not the power to speak. (1.27)

Ophelia's very emotions, not to mention her voice, are subsumed here by her aunt. Moreover, Ophelia speaks of separation from her aunt as an "irreparable" injury,

suggesting a schism or break so traumatic that it is felt on a physical level. In fact, the very language she uses to mourn her separation from her aunt is suggestive of a physical relationship, as Ophelia grieves the loss of "the pleasures of her sweet Indulgence and tender Affection" (1. 29). Indeed, when she rebuffs Dorchester's attempts to persuade her that she will enjoy London society much more than seclusion in Wales, her reply is actually strangely prescient of nineteenth-century psychoanalytic descriptions of the mother-child relationship. "I know not your Pleasures, nor your customs," she tells Dorchester, ". . . in my little Cottage were all my Desires gratified, and can I think that Man wishes me happy, who tears me from every Joy on Earth. My dear Aunt's tender Goodness and faithful Friendship, is a Blessing nothing can equal" (1. 32). Ophelia's assertions here suggest that in fact there is no freedom for her even while not under Dorchester's control. In Wales, without knowledge of the desires attendant upon "polite society," Ophelia is held captive not only by her aunt's determination not to allow her to experience these desires but also by the very lack of experience this determination produces, which translates directly into a lack of desire (since she does not know what she is missing). This in turn translates into the kind of complete satiation which, as her absorption into her aunt's subjectivity suggests, disables the voice of the subject by removing the necessity for speech–a fact that is emphasized by her lack of direct speech before her capture.

Just as Eve faces death shortly after her resistance to temptation fails, and Persephone faces death upon her own abduction, so too does Ophelia face her own demise–indeed, welcomes the thought of it–directly after her capture:

> The Day after our Arrival at the Cottage, instead of being refreshed, I appeared in a high Fever, which in a few Days increased to so great a Degree, as made me expect from the quiet Hand of Death, a Release from all my Troubles. I was too unhappy to be afflicted at this Expectation. Grief for what I had lost, and fear for what might ensue, fortified my Mind. Can the Wretched behold the Grave with Terror? that eternal Sleep from which no worldly Troubles can awaken them? that secure Asylum from the Injuries of Man, and the Frailty of their own Nature! In this pleasing Light, I then beheld it. (1. 34)[103]

Ophelia's first illness has led to her first contact with death, and serves to accentuate her sense of individuality in life. However, unlike Persephone, who becomes death, or Eve, for whom death is a reality but a distant one (and for whom the subjectivity in the meantime to some extent offers compensation), Ophelia's immediate contact with her own mortality establishes one of the themes of the novel: the link between discomfort, desire, and speech.

Ophelia's description of death also supports the explanation of her relationship with her Aunt as unindividuated on her part. The wrenching separation is now apparently irremediable, and a return to her former state is impossible. Death, with its "secure Asylum" and its freedom from cares (and to care is, in some way, to desire), would seem to be the next best thing. The process of individuation, the discovery of the ability to speak and of the self as speaking subject, is immensely painful in this case, perhaps painful enough that the voice it produces does not seem worth the attendant discomfort. In the knowledge that a return to the innocence of Wales is impossible (and even a physical

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[103] This death wish sounds remarkably close to Zilia's suicide attempts in *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*; however, Zilia's experiences seem much "simpler"–much more clearly the result of emotional distress. The fact that Ophelia's near death experience is not self-inflicted, coupled with her discussion of her feelings during the fever, suggest that her experience and her account are somewhat more complex.

return looks improbable), the only other option seems to be the ultimate subsuming and erasure of self.

But death, like the absolute satiation of Ophelia's life in Wales, eliminates desire, and, along with it, voice. Thus above all else, this text seems to expose the necessity of the absence of satiation in the production of an individual speaking subject. Although it is the discomfort of being stared at and the fear of it happening again which cause Ophelia to "consent to the Silence [Dorchester] required, concerning my past Life" (1. 93),[104] by and large Ophelia comes to depend upon discomfort to generate her voice. While her desires are all fulfilled, her voice remains derivative, her position more like that of a chorus than that of a main role. After her capture, whenever Ophelia comes to admit that with Dorchester "Every thing I could want was provided for me" (and here it is interesting to note that she does not qualify this with a reference to her absent aunt), her circumstances immediately change in order to cause her more discomfort. Even an excess of something supposed to contribute to material comfort is disturbing to her: "Lord *Dorchester's* desire

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[104] Upon leaving for London from Dorchester's country house, Ophelia is "advised"

> to give Way only to silent Wonder, if any thing surprized me, except when he only was present; for to him my Simplicity and natural Remarks must always be most delightful, but that to others it would be unnecessary to give any further Account of myself than that I was under his Care. (1. 91)

Ophelia promptly launches into an extended and vituperative indictment of Dorchester's "advice" and is cowed by him only when he suggests her use of language would reveal her naivete and make her an object of scrutiny. Dorchester's admonitions reveal clearly that perhaps his strongest need is for Ophelia's public silence–a requirement that echoes her aunt's rather passive-aggressive maneuver when Ophelia continually refers to Dorchester after his initial departure from the cottage in Wales.

of giving me every Pleasure in his power, led him to make me a Present of a Sum of Money: I would have excused myself from the acceptance of it, as it appeared to me entirely useless . . . . I wished . . . to refuse an unnecessary Burden; but he insisted, and I was obliged to acquiesce" (1. 61-62). The narrative refuses to allow the balance of fulfilled desire to develop–and if it does, the text comments on the lack of voice which inevitably seems to accompany it.

Eventually, Ophelia herself notes indirectly that the comfort of satiation leads to an erasure of self. In an abridgment of Lockean principles, she seems to indicate that not only are we directly motivated by a desire to escape discomfort or pain, we almost need to feel pain in order to know we are alive. As she notes after an absence from Dorchester: "my Peevishness shewed him as well as myself, how necessary his Company was to my Happiness; a Circumstance that could not but be agreeable to him, and could not be painful to me, while every Wish was gratified by his Presence. and the Charms of his Conversation left no room for Reflection" (1. 138-39). That Ophelia is left "no room for reflection" emphasizes the satiation/plenitude she feels when her desires are fulfilled. but it also gestures toward the consequence of this. The inability to reflect suggests a fundamental inability to reason, and implies a lack of *self*-reflection, an inability to see the self as an individual. Although this satiated and comfortable state is remarked upon. the continual separation of Ophelia from Dorchester. through the captivities-within-captivities she experiences (particularly the one perpetrated by the Marchioness of Trente) and frequent mis-communications do not allow it to continue.

The desire which discomfort produces seems to lead to a subjectivity less

susceptible to trauma and less reliant upon one person to orient the self. In contrast to the hysteria she manifests upon her removal from her aunt's care, when Ophelia speaks of time spent without Dorchester, her terms are much more muted and much less emotionally strident. She expresses herself in terms of comfort and discomfort, shedding a tear and feeling a "Proof of abated Love" when Dorchester informs her that they must live in different houses while in London, and cites as his reason that "the great Numbers of People he was obliged to see upon Business, would be very troublesome." Ophelia's reply, though passionate, expresses not need but desire:

> I assured him, that, "nothing could be so vexatious to me, as being absent from him, and that were we in different Houses, I must lose a great Deal of his Company, which I might otherwise enjoy, especially as Business would engage him so much at Home. For were I under the same Roof, the shortest Intervals would allow me the Sight of him." (1. 94)

And in fact, directly after this admission the first of two ancillary captivity experiences Ophelia undergoes occurs, as if to emphasize Ophelia's assessment of her relationship with Dorchester. Having, we later learn, mistakenly gotten into the wrong equipage and been conducted to a trysting spot for a young woman seeking to escape her guardians by running to the arms of a young rake, Ophelia spends a day away from Dorchester in a secluded country house with only a blowsy and garrulous landlady for company. Having been told that "my Lord" (whom she assumes is Dorchester, but who turns out to be the other young rake) will arrive in the evening, and hearing a carriage draw up outside the house, Ophelia both reiterates and deepens her assessment of her relationship with her captor:

> My Heart now felt a Flutter it had never known before; this being the first Time of any long Separation from my Lord. I was, till now, ignorant of the

> Pain or Pleasure of Expectation. I knew not how very dear his Company was to me, till taught by being a whole Day without it. I immediately thought I penetrated his Design in this whimsical Adventure; imagining that he certainly had contrived it as a Punishment for my Desire of leaving him; and to prevent my re-urging that Request, by making me better acquainted with my own Heart, which could never be able to bear his Absence. (1. 103)

The first statement of this exclamation is, of course, absolutely inaccurate; this is simply the first time she has been separated from Dorchester since the abduction. This inaccuracy calls attention to the rest of the content of this passage, which reveals that she has now learned to recognize "Expectation" which, although different from what she feels about her inability to return to Wales, still describes a form of desire, once again firmly linked to discomfort. As well, the effect of this experience–though Dorchester has not engineered it–is of making Ophelia "better acquainted with [her] own Heart." This suggests that although desire is essential to self-knowledge, or subjectivity, Dorchester himself is not.

Thus what this novel describes is the attempt to develop a subjectivity which is able to exist and negotiate in the world as an independent unit, related to and reliant upon but not abject to those reference points which describe its desire. The importance of this comes through not only in Ophelia's inability, until abducted, to extricate herself from the subsuming influence of her aunt, but also in the assumption that Dorchester expresses upon her pleas to him to return her to Wales:

> though your presence is more necessary to my Existence than the Light of the Sun; yet would I restore you to your Aunt, was I not sure that in a little Time you would confess yourself happier with me, than in the dull Solitude from whence I have brought you, to introduce you to a Variety of lively and inchanting Pleasures. (1. 31-32)

Here Dorchester expresses what Ophelia has herself illustrated: her experiences with him

have made the "solitude" of life with her aunt insupportable; the introduction of not just "Pleasures" but a *variety* of them means that there is always something for her to desire, and thus a constant reason for Ophelia to exercise her voice.

Ophelia's suit to be returned to her aunt raises the importance of desire over and over. Having let the subject drop for some time, she renews her pleas as Dorchester prepares to remove her to London for the winter season. Surprised at her persistence in raising the subject again, Dorchester exclaims: "Ask any Thing, but yourself, and judge of my Love, by the Pleasure with which I shall grant it: But Life has no Charms for me but in giving me the Power of conversing with you, and to relinquish one is giving up the other." In response, Ophelia is robbed of her ability to speak: "I was so moved with the Effect of what I had already said, that I could no longer urge my Suit; I could not even wish to go while he seemed averse to it" (1. 87). What exactly causes Ophelia to lose the ability to speak is cast into question here. The "Effect" she refers to could relate to Dorchester's distress, but grammatically speaking it could as easily be an effect that she herself feels. If this is indeed the case, then the loss of voice here results from memories of her time with her aunt rather than from her time with Dorchester.

In fact, it is Ophelia's attempt to regress to the kind of (lack of) subjectivity she experiences while living with her aunt which brings on a terrible fever. She expresses a desire to return to where her aunt's "tender and constant Affection" will allow her to "receive Consolation for the Faults of others, and, far from this bad Town, to learn to forget it, and its cruel Inhabitants, whose Minds are as variable as their climate" (1. 188). What she is complaining of here is the shifting moral scenery, in which she is unable to

locate herself with any certainty. Her fever saves her by allowing her to "float," rather than try to secure any space to speak from. This floating, which Ophelia describes as "light-headedness," has some interesting effects:

> I grew, at last, so bad, that I was light-headed; to which I may attribute my Recovery. Want of Reflexion did what Reason could not effect; it quieted my Mind, and my Constitution received Benefit from it; for as Grief was the cause of my Illness, the Loss of the Sense of my Affliction, left me to Youth and natural Strength, and my Fever abated. (1. 188-89)

Here "want of Reflexion" and "Reason" are directly contrasted, and it is the want of reflection (lack of self-knowledge) that brings comfort, which is in turn related to speechlessness.

What gives rise to the fever is Dorchester's unfounded assumption that Ophelia is transferring her affections to Charles Lisdale, as a result of which Dorchester has left town and sent a reproachful letter to Ophelia stating that he will never see her again. In doing this. Dorchester removes himself as the focus of Ophelia's desire and it becomes clear that desire (as with Zilia's landmarks) is closely linked to hope. Without the hope of seeing Dorchester again, desire is pointless and thus Ophelia's reason for speech seems gone.[105] Even when her physical body is out of danger of death, in Dorchester's continued and presumably final absence Ophelia reports she has "neither Strength to move, nor Spirits to speak," and perhaps most importantly, that "had not a Ray of Hope at last shone upon [her] . . . [her] existence had not been of long duration" (1. 192).

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[105] When she first falls ill with fever after the initial abduction, Ophelia is unable to speak until the promise of a return to the cottage in Wales and her aunt renders her "capable of conversing with tolerable Ease," though her "Heart was still oppressed with Sorrow."

The "Ray of Hope" Ophelia clings to as she recovers involves an interview with Lady Palestine, and her powers of speech seem to return to her as a result of this hope. Even so, her recovery is incomplete as long as Dorchester's absence seems to have no termination point. Only after Ophelia receives a letter from him asking her forgiveness does she regain even temporarily the full use of her body: "[Dorchester's] Letter found me in so weak a Condition that I had not til then been able to get down Stairs without Assistance; but such a Cordial is Joy, that I ran down to the Servant to enquire where his Lordship was" (1. 200).

This is not to suggest that the position Ophelia finds herself in when she is abducted is less restrictive than that with her aunt in Wales. Although she now speaks from a position of desire, has a much clearer sense of her own identity, and for the greater part of the narrative does not really want to go back to live in Wales but merely to see her Aunt,[106] her position in Dorchester's town society (and his designs on her) coupled with her own ignorance (masquerading as innocence) compound to place incredible restrictions on her voice now that she has found it. This fact is illustrated through Ophelia's experiences in two separate situations, one which unveils the extent to which female separatism may be stifling, and one which comments darkly on marriage as an alternative to it.

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[106] In fact, the only times she really suggests that she could once again live happily with her aunt are the times when it seems life with Dorchester would be impossible, either because he has (for mistaken reasons) rejected her, or because she has discovered his plan and leaves him for her honour's sake.

III. "She lost all Liberty of Thought"

The critique of feminine separatism and isolation begun with the stifling "social climate" illustrated in Ophelia's life with her aunt continues to be played out in a curious way long after Ophelia has left Wales. At the beginning of the second and much more sinister of the two captivity-within-captivity narratives the novel contains, Ophelia is snatched as she travels home on the streets of London, forced into an unfamiliar sedan chair, and carried off by the minions of the Marchioness of Trente, who is Dorchester's former lover and now Ophelia's jealous rival. In many ways, the situation in which Ophelia finds herself during this additional captivity becomes a funhouse-mirroring of her situation in Wales, and illustrates and emphasizes the sterile and unproductive nature of her isolated life there as she again becomes trapped in an all-female milieu almost exclusively limited to two people: Ophelia herself and the Marchioness's poorer cousin, Mrs. Herner.

Ophelia's actual location for the greater part of this particular captivity is a grotesque parody of the edenic landscape of Wales. Compared side by side, Ophelia's description of the Eden of Wales and the anti-Eden of the Marchioness's castle (which is also in the country) are related not simply through their inverse natures but even by the very order in which Ophelia lists their features. The "beautiful, though . . . wild and mountainous Prospect" (1.10) of Wales becomes at the castle a garden "not, in Extent, equal to the size of the House" and "what there was of it, was laid out in narrow Gravel Walks, then over-brown with weeds, bordered with Box" (2. 20). The rural pasture land filled with animals is recast as "Yew Swans, Laurel Bears, Holly Dogs, and Box chickens.

their Colours happily variegated by the dead Branches, which made up about three Quarters of the Animal," and instead of the happy "care and attendance" which her aunt gives her animals in return for "Support and Sustenance" (1. 11-12) the emphasis is on how the dying branches add to "the great Ease of the Gardener, who was thereby saved the Care of watching over this his Creation, lest their Shapes should be destroyed by the irregular Growth of some luxuriant Branches" (2. 20). The separatism that initially appears natural in the context of an idyllic pastoral setting steeped in the comforts of abundant fertility is here revealed as a horrifying comfortless wasteland as artificial as it is barren. Ophelia's Aunt's "protective isolation" is also exposed as an illusion more correctly identified as a stifling captivity.

In a variation of her experience with her aunt in Wales, Ophelia has no voice at the castle not because she has no desire, and not entirely even because she has been roundly forbidden to talk, but because she has no audience. Interestingly, her most vocal complaints while she is captive of the Marchioness, even before her removal from a small dark room to the Marchioness's gothic castle,[107] although couched in terms of a desire for Dorchester, are in fact quite independent of him except for circumstance:

> I hourly repined at having exchanged the Pleasures of Lord *Dorchester's* Conversation for the most odious Solitude, with no Object to entertain my Eyes, or raise new Ideas in me; denied the Sound of a human Voice, or any Thing that might in any Degree divert my Thoughts from the Pains of my present Situation, or from the Fears of what farther Punishment might still

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[107] Bree notes that "Four years before the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, commonly regarded as the first Gothic novel, Fielding actually immures her heroine in a full-blown gothic castle" (Bree 141). The description of the castle itself is so ludicrous in its hyperbolic gothicism that "one can scarcely believe there was no Gothic novel for Miss Fielding to be satirizing" (Parrish 221, qtd in Bree 141-42).

be in Store for me. (1. 267)

What rankles with Ophelia here is not the lack of Dorchester nearly so much as the lack, also expressed by Zilia in *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*, of any audience for her thoughts. Only within a dialogue, it is suggested, can new ideas occur. At the same time as this highlights the need for audience, it critiques the uniform and unstimulating existence to which women tended to be relegated, without the benefit of the kind of education that allowed them to participate in (masculine) intellectual discourse–the discourse of "new Ideas." The "new Idea" is what has become necessary–the ever shifting grounds across which to keep locating the subject as speaking self. Thus even though Ophelia exclaims to the Marchioness of Trente that the company of her original captor, Dorchester, is preferable, it is not his person she longs for as much as it is the linguistic exchange: "Nothing could appear so dreadful to me, as losing the *Conversation* of Lord Dorchester" (1. 271, emphasis added).[108]

The story of Ophelia's third captivity continues in the opening of the second volume of the novel. Because this opening is a point of emphasis in the work, it would be logical to assume that the topics taken up would be those which Ophelia considers most important. Thus it is a bit of a surprise to note that Dorchester is not mentioned once in

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[108] It is the nature of this conversation which distinguishes Ophelia's relationship with her aunt and that which she has with Dorchester. With him, Ophelia is not asked to regurgitate the opinions of her captor/keeper. The desire that characterizes her relationship with Dorchester (and is markedly absent from her life with her aunt) is based on difference and, although Ophelia and Dorchester are brought together by the mutuality of their desire for conversation (and for each other), it is the difference which underlies that desire which makes it powerful, in contrast to the absolute sameness that characterizes Ophelia's relationship with her aunt and leads to her lack of individuality and voice in Wales.

the entire first chapter. In fact, the point to which Ophelia continues to draw attention is her need for conversation–not necessarily with Dorchester, but with *anyone*, including the rather odious Mrs. Herner; she feels not an ardent longing for Dorchester but rather "an ardent Longing to talk" (2. 1).[109] The fact that at this point she has need not for Dorchester in particular but rather for a human being in general to assert her very individual desire for speech suggests that she has developed coping methods that have created in her a desire which does not rely on anything further than an audience. In fact, when she finally makes contact with Mr. South, his primary merit, for Ophelia, is that he takes "the Embargo off [her] Speech" (2. 26).

One of the points the second meta-captivity brings attention to is that (particularly in the case of Mrs. Herner) the combination of social status and impecunious state (a combination Sarah Fielding would have found very familiar) holds women captive to the likes of the Marchioness of Trente more surely and securely than Ophelia herself is held in captivity either by the marchioness or by Dorchester, since she can escape or at least move fairly freely about.[110] Mrs. Herner's response to her captivity under the Marchioness of

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[109] In fact, Ophelia does not even mention Dorchester until Mrs. Herner brings him up by showing Ophelia a letter from the Marchioness "in which, she related . . . as she termed it, 'the happy Consequence of removing me out of Lord *Dorchester*'s sight'," some 48 pages into the second volume.

[110] At the same time as the text discloses the stifling effects of Ophelia's captivity in the castle (and, by association, of life with her aunt), it paradoxically discloses the relative freedom that her captive status affords her. As with Zilia, her ignorance of social convention frees her from the fear of public opinion, while the protection of Dorchester renders her (relatively) financially independent. In contrast, the relationship between Mrs. Herner, Ophelia's jailer, and the Marchioness of Trent, Herner's cousin, is exposed as just another kind of captivity. Mrs. Herner's history, that of a gentlewoman who becomes penniless and dependent on her relatives, who then feel free to abuse her, exposes the

Trente is quite unlike Ophelia's response to her own under Dorchester:

> From a continual servile Compliance with the Will of another, she lost all Liberty of Thought, of which only one's own Meanness can deprive one. She entirely forgot the Method of pronouncing the Word No; her Language was composed of nothing but Expressions of Assent and Affirmatives; and she would contradict her own Senses, as often as her violent and capricious Cousin, happened to err. So accustomed to obey, she scarcely could find out Terms that would express her Refusal of the Liberty she dared not grant me. I sometimes mistook her Negatives for Consent, and should not have discovered my Error, had she not checked me when I was going to act in consequence of it. (2. 5)

The situation Ophelia describes here, horrific as it sounds, is, in its linguistic implications, simply an amplification of Ophelia's own situation with her aunt in Wales. Although Ophelia's dependence on her aunt comes from her youth and isolation–an isolation her aunt has not only encouraged but enforced–whereas Mrs. Herner's dependence on her cousin comes from her poverty and "*Pride that licks the Dust*" (2. 5), the ultimate effect of the dependence in both cases is the same. At the castle Mrs. Herner is unable to express her own opinions because her economic dependency on her cousin has robbed her of the ability to formulate them; in Wales Ophelia is unable to express her own opinions because she has never been given the opportunity to formulate them.[111]

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captivity–albeit non-physical–that women faced when trapped between social class and lack of money. Mrs. Herner must stay with and do the bidding of the Marchioness because economically she cannot otherwise survive. She is even described as having "for a Subsistence, sold herself to the most abject slavery: But she was too proud to take any other Means of gaining a Support" (2. 5).

[111] In the context of her escape from Mrs. Herner (and, by proxy, the Marchioness), and in a sense in direct commentary on Herner"s situation, Ophelia has this to say about the difficulties of unreturned obligations, as she turns down the assistance of Mr. Smith because she feels she cannot marry him: "No Captivity can be so grievous to me as the Sense of Obligations which it will never by in my Power to repay" (2. 68).

In light, then, of the doubtful value this text places on female separatism, it might be expected that marriage, in contrast, would be portrayed as a positive alternative. To the extent that the introduction of desire into Ophelia's life seems the single most necessary event to the development of her own individual voice, this appears to be true, as the text joins desire and discomfort as necessary in the production of speech. However, in yet another set of almost allegorical parallels mirroring the appearance/reality dichotomy illustrated by the Eden/anti-Eden of female separatism, Fielding's work undermines the apparent conservatism of an endorsement of married life in a re-examination of marriage itself.

Ophelia's fears of town culture and of Dorchester's dubious intentions where marriage are concerned have a sound basis, since even in the midst of her captivity with the Marchioness of Trente, a portion of the narrative which specifically targets female separatism, marriage itself is revealed as yet another form of captivity. Ophelia meets Mrs. Giles, who is treated with such contempt by her husband that, as her sister in law Martha tells Ophelia:

> between you and I Miss (but one would not have those Things repeated) she once resented this Behaviour so much, that they were going to part upon it, and she and I were to have lived together, removing to some Place where we might have conversed with Persons of more refined Understandings.

But as with Herner, and in the end with Ophelia herself, the specter of dependence (economic, social, or both) rears its head, as Martha continues her story:

> But while they were bartering about the Terms of a separate Maintenance, a political Dispute arose between her and myself, which convinced me so fully of the Impossibility of ever bringing her to Reason on that Subject, that I declared against living with her, and a Reconciliation between them

ensued. (2. 33)

Mrs. Giles is caught between marriage with a man who abuses her or life with a woman who will not allow her to voice an opinion–and both are exposed here as evils.

The interpolated tale of Mrs. Darkling's marriage provides another illustration of the untenable positions open to impecunious gentlewomen. In another allegorical rendering of Ophelia's own life, we are told that before her marriage Mrs. Darkling is a destitute young woman who "lived with a Maiden Aunt, of a Temper by no Means easy" (2. 35). In an inverse parallel of Ophelia's own tale, Mrs. Darkling marries Mr. Darkling, a country boy, and in the process untruthfully professes to love the country life because her social and financial status makes "finding some more certain Provision" necessary. He then takes her to the country–which she finds an intolerable confinement. The inverse parallels with Ophelia's own situation echo those of the castle's anti-Eden and Wales, and anticipate the strange rhetoric of Ophelia's eventual acceptance of marriage to Dorchester.

Particularly in light of Ophelia's aunt's earlier marriage to yet another rake and the disastrous results which set the whole narrative in motion, Ophelia's marriage (particularly given the connections between this text and *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*) is more of a surprise ending (and perhaps an unfinished one) than her retreat to the country might have been. In a sense, what happens to Ophelia may have been what happened to Aza, and what could have happened to Zilia, had she married Déterville. It seems especially odd that in the end the person whose arguments convince Ophelia to remain with Dorchester in the corrupt society of London is her aunt–the very person who sought to keep her isolated from exactly these influences. The effect of this on Ophelia, as she herself freely admits, is

to allow her to follow her own inclinations without taking any responsibility for them, in a sense negating her own decision-making agency: "Her Opinion gave a Sanction for my yielding; I could call my Weakness obedient" (2. 279). That this is to be seen as a mistake on the part of Ophelia can be deduced in part from a reading of Fielding's *oeuvre* as a whole, for as Bree points out, Sarah Fielding "accepts the importance of women fulfilling their duties as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers, with wisdom and honour. But she also demands that . . . [they] . . . accept a preeminent responsibility to themselves as mature human beings responsible for their own actions. It is in such demands that Sarah Fielding's true radicalism lies" (Bree 149), a fact borne out most decisively in *The Countess of Dellwyn.*[112]

Thus the novel ends, in a sense, as a tragedy. Having spent months in uncomfortable places which enable her desire and thus her voice, in the end Ophelia decides (as Aza did) to assimilate completely. The way in which she makes this decision speaks to the possibility of its devastating effects, as she gives in to Dorchester with disturbing abandon: "you have conquered all my Resolutions, dispose of the Remainder of my Life as you please, my Happiness is in your Hands, I may repent, but I find, I must comply!" (2. 278-80). By itself this exclamation raises questions about the agency Ophelia has in making this choice–let alone its wisdom–echoing as it does Mrs. Herner's inability to "pronounce[] the Word 'No'" (2. 5). But Ophelia goes even further, exclaiming:

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[112] In *The Countess of Dellwyn* Charlotte Lucum, primarily because Lady Fanny Fashion, a distant relative of Charlotte's, has bigger and better jewels than she has, marries the Count of Dellwyn, who bears a striking resemblance to Rochester's "Disabled Debauchee." Charlotte, who has married for money, enters the "high life" and is corrupted. By the end of the novel her behaviour causes her lifelong disgrace.

> Lord *Dorchester's* excessive Joy made me feel that Pleasure in my Consent, which Reason had denied me. My Felicity was perfect in feeling I had made him happy; I was insensible to any Dangers, within which my Peace was threatened by his Principles, while I had the infinite Satisfaction of imparting Happiness to one that was dearer to me than myself; I felt I was unworthy of a Thought, mine were all engrossed by him, every other Object seemed beneath my Care, and if he was happy, I believed I must be blessed. (2. 280)

Although Ophelia's words and tone might suggest that all is well, and while the emphasis on subordination to and care of the desires of a husband seems to advocate for social conservatism, this epithalamion and its expressions of happiness are expressed entirely in the past tense. Along with Ophelia's own expression of the possibility that she might repent her action, the bitter irony of the subtext of her speech here parallels that which some modern critics read in Kate's capitulation and subordination to Petruchio. Reason, linked by Ophelia earlier in the text to speech by its ability to separate humans from "dumb Animals," does not give Ophelia pleasure (and even seems to require discomfort), and here she rejects it in favour of a "perfect Felicity," a state of comfort which, although it removes any sense of disquiet, renders her "unworthy of a Thought," as her whole self is "engrossed by [Dorchester]." But the very grammar of this speech, written in retrospect, belies (like the Marchioness's castle) the idyllic nature of the description. "I was," she says, "insensible to any Dangers, within which my Peace was threatened by his Principles," tacitly admitting to these dangers and in so doing emphasizing her own (by now, in the light of her "fallen" knowledge of good and evil) wilful blindness to the possibilities.[113]

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[113] That Ophelia's ignorance is self-willied is emphasized by the parallels between this acceptance of marriage and her recounting of the abduction scene, where her fear centres on her aunt's terror rather than the "Danger" Dorchester represents but that she cannot "apprehend." The danger Dorchester represents has, by this time, been made very

"[I]f he was happy," she ends, "I believed I must be blessed," and the fact that she places her belief firmly in the past tense suggests that her beliefs have changed–a suggestion borne out by the ambivalent grammatical constructions pervading the scene.

Even her aunt expresses regret immediately upon having convinced Ophelia to marry:

> My Lord, I have done all you asked of me; I have suffered Compassion and that weak Sympathy, which I believe all feel for the Pains of Lovers, who have themselves known the Pangs of Love, to conquer my Opinion. I have persuaded the only Joy of my Heart, and Blessing of my Age, to an Union with a Man, whose Principles I always looked upon as an infallible Source of Unhappiness to the Woman whose Fate must depend upon them. I never saw any Thing but Repentance succeed a Marriage with a Rake, and yet Compassion for you, and indeed, for my Niece, whose Fondness for you is but too visible . . . has made me plead your Course, and prevail in it. (2. 280-81)

Ophelia's description of Dorchester's reaction is telling: "your Ladyship may imagine Lord *Dorchester* was not sparing of his Promises," she says, emphasizing promises over actual conduct. She goes on: "He defended himself from the Imputation of a Rake, though he confessed, his Principles had been very defective." And although she explains that he "rendered the Rest of our Lives a Scene of Bliss," the whole tone of the narrative tells us that bliss is not, after all, a necessarily attractive state, since from it no voice may issue. Bliss, lack of desire, translates directly, in this text, into lack of voice and subjecthood, and absolute fulfillment of every desire, now that desires are so many and varied, intimates a hedonism incompatible with morality.

"Goodness and Faithful Friendship" are not all Ophelia finds in her aunt, and in

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clear to her.

fact the parallel relationships Ophelia has with her aunt and Dorchester bear some examination. Even at the end of the narrative, Ophelia's aunt takes a primary place in her niece's affections–a place so primary, and an affection so strong, in fact, that it raises the eyebrows of people witnessing their reunion:

> At the Sight of my Aunt, I ran to meet her; and we received each other with an Embrace from which the Spectators thought we could never be disengaged . . . . The Extacy I was in, at seeing one so inexpressibly dear to me, far exceeded the Force of Fancy, and a long Time passed in rejoicing at the Felicity we felt, before I took Notice of the Person who accompanied my Aunt. (2. 277-78)

Even earlier in the narrative, when Ophelia compares the love of her Aunt with that of Dorchester, she uses the same terms and expresses the difference only in degree:

> I thought his Love more tender and more ardent, than what my Aunt and I had felt for each other; this I attributed to a warmer Temper in Youth, and to the Probability that a Friendship for one of equal Age, might be stronger than where there was a Disparity in Years, as the Similitude of Taste and Disposition must naturally be greater. (1. 79)

Once again when she renews her suit to be returned to her aunt as Dorchester prepares to remove her to London, she compares the love she feels for each of them in a corresponding way, telling Dorchester that "it was not just to be offended with me for a Desire to return to one, with whom I had been so long united in Affection, and consequently ought to love better than he could me, in so short a Time" (1. 87).

At several points, not the least of which is their combined pressure at the end of the novel for Ophelia to marry, Dorchester and her Aunt actually seem to be working collaboratively, almost as metonymic representatives of the social forces constraining women's voices. The place where it seems most sinister occurs when the Aunt first takes Dorchester aside in Wales to explain to him how he must conduct himself to remain

welcome:

> I have since been told, that my Aunt would not suffer him to stay, but on Condition, that he should say nothing which might tend to lessen my ignorant Simplicity, having taken an Opportunity upon my leaving the Room of acquainting him with her Reasons for bringing me up in a happy Ignorance of Evil, which she hoped would never be dispelled. (1. 23)

The troubling thing about this exchange is that Dorchester, even (or perhaps particularly) after his abduction of Ophelia, follows this directive absolutely. Ophelia's "happy Ignorance" is essential to his own happy sensual corruption. What must absolutely not occur is Ophelia becoming aware of her social and moral position based on the landmarks of the society around her–landmarks which would automatically have identified to her that her situation is fully as dangerous as her Aunt's situation in America.

In the end, the difference between Dorchester's and the aunt's positions occurs only in relation to the position of Ophelia. Her aunt insists that she remain secluded, so that the landmarks of corruption should not be available to her–in a sense rendering her vulnerable by denying her education, and cheapening her virtue by insisting that it be cloistered.[114] Dorchester, however, argues that this would be cruel in that it would deny Ophelia the pleasure that comes with these landmarks, the primary of which is admiration of her person (a pleasure arguably more to the observer's benefit than to the observed's). What seems to be emerging in the bickering over Ophelia's condition and position is a philosophical conflict which had been current in debates in England and the continent for some eighty years: what is the primary force of human motivation? Ophelia's aunt seems

[114] Eve also complains about the constraints of cloistered virtue: "And what is faith, love, virtue unassayed / Alone, without exterior help sustained?" (*Paradise Lost* 9. 335-36).

to concur with Locke in that she attempts, by proxy, to avoid placing Ophelia in a painful situation. Dorchester's reaction to this suggests rather an emphasis on pleasure (although the question of whose is still unanswered). Ophelia herself seems to suggest that there is a price to be paid for self-consciousness, and that the position of the speaking subject is always associated with the pain of loss.

In the end, even though Ophelia "loses" and social conservatism "wins" as she capitulates to convention–in all likelihood surrendering her agency–the report she gives of this process in her narrative provides glimpses of the consequences of marriage as being so negative that the "moral" status of this tale as a defender of social conservatism becomes seriously compromised. Fielding works with the conventions of realist fiction whose subject positions Carolyn Woodward notes "allow little space for a female subjectivity that may be contradictory, resisting, and desiring" (Woodward 842). The subversive power of consequences only darkly hinted at provides a moral as murky as the society into which Ophelia has entered, and perhaps, in the end, acts as a cautionary tale to those women who would marry not wisely but too well.

Mary Jemison's Leather Stockings: Cultural Identity and the Middle Ground

That to biographical writings we are indebted for the greatest and best field in which to study mankind, or human nature, is a fact duly appreciated by a well-informed community. In them we can trace the effects of mental operations to their proper sources. . .
–James E. Seaver, "Author's Preface."

"I did not tell them the half of what it was"
–Mary Jemison

Perhaps the most astonishing moment for readers of Mary Jemison's 1824 *Narrative* detailing her life among the Seneca must have come when, having been captured and then separated from her family (all of whom, she learns, are killed), and having endured a lengthy forced march through the wilderness, she remarks:

> it was not long before I was in some measure relieved by the appearance of two pleasant looking squaws of the Seneca tribe, who came and examined me attentively for a short time, and then went out. After a few minutes absence they returned with my former masters, who gave me to them to dispose of as they pleased. (75)

Never would Mary Rowlandson, for example, have referred to her captors as agents of relief, even though her narrative at times describes them indirectly as such. The contrast between Jemison's reaction to the two Indian women and Rowlandson's reaction to her momentary misrecognition of Indians in English clothing is startling. To Jemison, the Indian women are even "pleasant looking," and no mention is ever made of howling savages, "foul looks," or barbaric practices. Jemison even recounts the painting of her face and hair with red ochre as pleasant, describing her adornment as "in the finest Indian style" (73). Whereas Rowlandson becomes a part of Indian culture almost in spite of herself.

Jemison seems to welcome it, at least in hindsight.[115] Thus although Jemison's *Narrative* comes from the same tradition as Mary Rowlandson's earlier account, the story of her capture on April 5, 1754/5 at age twelve, subsequent adoption into and lifelong cultural participation in a Seneca tribe brings to light a new paradox growing out of the issues of captivity, freedom and speech.

The previous chapters of this study have explored the almost inescapable tendency–conscious or not–of a captivity narrative written by a woman to subvert the cultural restraints placed on the author's voice due to the behavioral expectations accorded her gender. The unique nature of Jemison's case comes in part from the fact that although like many captivity narratives her text is presented in the first person, she herself was illiterate and dictated her narrative to a retired doctor named James Seaver. The story's tendency, then, to undermine any sort of social conservatism–a tendency implicit in the fact that not only did Jemison marry into the Native culture twice (once to a Delaware and once to a Seneca) but also repeatedly refused to return to "white" culture even when given the opportunity to do so–is restricted not only by Euro-American cultural expectations but also by the expectations of the text's male transcriber, whose editorial voice frequently becomes obvious, and even intrusive. Thus Jemison–or more specifically her voice–is recaptured by her amanuensis, and by his inability to conceive of her level of

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[115] In addition to the different cultural circumstances between Rowlandson's close-knit Puritan community and Jemison's isolated frontier farm, the age of each of these women and their positions in their respective communities played a decisive role in their reactions to their capture. Rowlandson was the forty-year-old wife of a minister and mother of three when she was captured in 1675, while Jemison was a young girl of about thirteen at the time of her capture in 1754.

comfort in her choice of cultures. What is extraordinary, given the text's 'captive' status, is the degree to which an identifiable, individual self escapes not only the cross-cultural restraints inherent in her experience but also Seaver's unremitting attempts to contain her voice through re-interpretation.

But even though the selfhood expressed in the narrative (and its later incarnations) cannot possibly be the creation of a single woman, in the polyphony of voices it brings together, the voice of an individual is heard. And her voice continues to capture the imagination not just of a continent, but of much of the English-speaking world–a feat very unusual for a woman, and even unusual for a single specific captivity narrative, given that "[h]undreds of them were written between the late seventeenth and early twentieth century" (Namias 1992: 10). The question this chapter seeks to explore is how this individual selfhood raises its voice, and how the individual who expresses it manages, as a whole, to transcend the cultural pressures that affect it.

Why does Mary Jemison's story stand out so boldly against the masses of captivity literature that were being published? June Namias responds by suggesting that "it demonstrates how one woman reacted, interacted, and survived, not for a month or a year, but for a lifetime." She continues, "[p]erhaps part of its popularity was due to Jemison's ability to achieve what nineteenth-century American culture could not: an accommodation between two cultures, a womanhood that balanced strength with caring, and an ability to adapt with integrity (Namias 1992: 12). Reminiscent of Zilia's predicament in the final chapters of *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* (and Ophelia's much more artificial circumstance in Fielding's novel), Jemison, Susan Scheckel claims, "[i]nstead of being reincorporated into

the white culture . . . remains permanently in what can be compared to the liminal stage of the initiation process, the state of being between two well-defined social positions" (Scheckel 95). However, the fact that even Jemison's final homestead, before she becomes too old to keep it and moves onto the reservation (and it is noteworthy that she moves to the reservation rather than the town) lies in the middle ground between the Indian settlement and the white, does not necessarily mean that her property or her person are defined by liminality. It also casts doubt upon the extent to which the "two social positions" she held were in fact well defined. This, however, has not stopped interpreters ever since Seaver's original assessment from choosing sides and attempting to define Jemison as either Indian or white.

Seaver's rhetorical moves, of course, try to place Jemison finally within the ranks of Euro-Americans. The title page to the narrative emphasizes "the Murder of her Father and his Family; her sufferings" and "barbarities of the Indians in the French and Revolutionary Wars" rather than the contentment with her life which Mary herself underscores. This is perhaps understandable, given the social pressures of the day. But even in a 1993 review of Namias edition of the narrative, Edith Gelles remarks upon Jemison's "choice on several occasions to remain among the Seneca rather than return to her own people" (Gelles 104). Gelles's rhetorical move brings into focus the tension even present-day critics feel when coping with Jemison's position. Although she never denies her white roots, and probably considered rejoining white society, in the end Jemison retires to her "kindred and family" on the reservation, and even in the last pages of her narrative refers to the Indians, not the European Americans, as "our people" (Jemison

160).

The assumption of Jemison's essential "whiteness" is reflected in almost every critical reading of her narrative. Even those studies which interest themselves in the fact that "Mary Jemison *lived with the Indians,*" Susan Walsh notes, inevitably "end up focusing, in one way or another, on her essential *whiteness*. As a result, the 'captive' interpretations . . . have so far prevailed, helping to cast a long shadow over Mary Jemison the acculturated Seneca" (Walsh 50). Walsh is one of the few exceptions to this rule, claiming in contrast that this narrative may be read as "the story of a Seneca woman," and possibly "the first Indian autobiography to reach publication" (Walsh 51). Although there may be no reason to suspect, as Walsh does, that the narrative's record of Mary's mother's farewell to her is not a faithful rendering (or as faithful as seventy intervening years might permit), and although Walsh's drive to establish Jemison as exclusively Indian may be overstating the opposite case, surely she is right to suggest that "once Jemison is adopted as a Seneca, her story spills over the sides of its literary container so that what had begun as a melodrama of beset womanhood segues into a tribute to departed sisters, brothers, husbands and children" (Walsh 54).

Jemison is, as Karen Oakes observes, "a (physically) white woman who is *also* a (culturally) Seneca woman" (Oakes 50), and these very characteristics allow her to negotiate the frontier between the two cultures, the no man's land that a woman seems to have been able to enter safely, although she never seems to have been able to leave it comfortably, even nearly two centuries after her death. This, added to the two disparate voices vying for control of the narrative, have led to a critical focus on trying to tease

apart exactly which words are Jemison's and which are Seaver's, or to separate Jemison the white woman from *Deghewanis*, the Seneca woman. What I wish to question is the extent to which these two beings may be inseparable, and thus to illuminate the importance of Jemison's bicultural and multifaceted identity as a subject. As a result the emphasis will be on her ability to describe the cross-cultural world she inhabits as (like her) an integrated and autonomous independent whole rather than a place between, always derivative. This chapter will examine how Jemison's ability to do this rests largely in her understanding of identity as not racial (as Rowlandson and even Seaver seem to understand it) but cultural. It will then explore the impact this understanding of identity on Jemison's critical interpreters from Seaver even to the present day.

I. Cultural Identity and the Middle Ground

Interestingly, when Mary Jemison, at the age of eighty, walked four miles to Seaver's cabin to tell him the story of her life, she was responding not to a Cavendish-like ambition to render herself immortal, but rather to a request made by Seaver himself. At the behest of "Daniel W. Banister, Esq.," who had been prompted in turn not only by his ambition "to add something to the accumulating fund of useful knowledge" but also by the "instance of several gentlemen," Seaver actually solicited Jemison's narrative and asked that he be allowed to record her story for posterity. His opinions and inflection skew the narrative in ways that are sometimes traceable or even documented, and Seaver's use of flowery and sentimental language indicates that this is clearly not a "purely transcribed"

text. It also suggests the importance of examining the extent to which Jemison's own telling of her story resists Seaver's ideological filter, and insists on identification through culture, rather than race.

It is just as impossible to decide how Seaver conducted his interview with Jemison as it is to determine the tone in which Jemison actually related her story, or in what light she viewed the events of her capture, including the death of her family. It is fairly safe to say that Seaver likely emphasized any hints that Jemison gave of her shock, just as it is fairly safe to say that the memory of some events likely still saddened and shocked Jemison to some extent. Even given this, Jemison's words at first being left alone after her capture, without the two boys who had come to be her only white companions on the journey, bear a striking resemblance to those of Mary Rowlandson when she is captured: "I was now left alone in the fort, deprived of my former companions, and of every thing that was near or dear to me but life" (75). Both Marys, even when stripped of their own cultural contexts and all that is familiar to them. are able to express their own individuality by emphasizing the dearness. above all else. of their own lives.

But here the similarity between the women ends. Certainly Rowlandson would never have said, "It was my happy lot to be accepted for adoption; and at the time of the ceremony I was received by the two squaws. to supply the place of their brother in the family; and I was ever considered and treated by them as a real sister, the same as though I had been born of their mother" (Jemison 78). Furthermore, even though the retellings of the Jemison story for children, such as Lois Lenski's *Indian Captive: The Story of Mary Jemison* (1941) and Jeanne LeMonnier Gardner's *Mary Jemison: Seneca Captive* (1966)

remark pointedly on how distressed Jemison was to be stripped of her "white clothes" and given Indian clothing to wear, Jemison's actual account makes no such point. In fact, her words are at worst neutral and even seem to express pleasure in and admiration of the Indian garments she is given:

> the Squaws left me in the canoe while they went to their wigwam or house in the town, and returned with a suit of Indian clothing, all new, and very clean and nice. My clothes, though whole and good when I was taken, were now torn in pieces, so that I was almost naked. They first undressed me and threw my rags into the river; then washed me clean and dressed me in the new suit they had just brought, in complete Indian style; and then led me home and seated me in the center of their wigwam. (76)

Her "white" clothes are simply "rags." There is no resistance whatsoever to the new apparel, but rather the sensible and somewhat pleased remark that the new clothes are "very clean and nice." Lenski's dramatized account renders this scene nearly unrecognizable:

> [The Indian clothes] were on before she knew it–before she was ready to put them on. At her feet she saw the little pile of homespun clothing which she had worn on the journey, the clothes her mother had spun for her and woven and sewed. They were only a pile of rags now, but they were all that was left to her of home. As she looked, the cross Indian woman picked them up and trotted off, walking briskly toward the river's edge.
>
> "Don't! Oh, don't!" cried Molly, dashing after her. "Oh, don't throw away my clothes!"
>
> She knew now what they were doing, They were taking away her homespun clothing and putting deerskin upon her. They were making an Indian out of a white girl. She made up her mind she would never, never let them. (Lenski 56)

In complete contrast to the assumptions Lenski makes in her fictionalization, and in strange, converse sympathy to Mary Rowlandson's bitter disappointment at her misrecognition of the Indians in white clothing, Jemison seems to assert that clothing has little to do with the racial identity of the wearer, and in fact identifies the clothing clearly

as being in a specific "style." rather than belonging to a race.

When Jemison is finally offered the opportunity to go back to "white" culture, soon after the end of the American Revolution, she turns it down, and gives an interesting explanation. She does not want to leave her son Thomas, whom the tribe will not let go, but more importantly she does not want her children to grow up in a culture where they will be discriminated against for their "Indian-ness." With the Seneca they were not discriminated against for their "whiteness," and the suggestion here is that although Euro-Americans judge Native Americans as racially different, the Native view of identity tends to be, in Jemison's interpretation, cultural instead. Anyone adopted by the Seneca people is Seneca, no matter what bloodlines reside in his or her heritage.[116] When Jemison makes her final decision, she tells her brother (who is referred to here without the qualification of "Indian") that "it was my choice to stay and spend the remainder of my days with my Indian friends, and live with my family as I had heretofore done" (120). Although "family" here could mean simply her children, given that the reference to her brother is unqualified. and particularly given the eulogy to him which directly follows. the connotation is that her family extends here far beyond those related to her by birth.

Jemison's reluctance to leave her Indian family and her integration into the Indian culture manifests itself even earlier in the narrative. Having been notified that a Dutch trader, John Van Sice, intends to take her to Niagara with or without her consent in order

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[116] William Starna notes, for example, that "[b]y 1668, it was reported that two-thirds of the Oneida population consisted of Algonquins and Hurons who had been captured in war and incorporated into their tribe" (18). Traditional practices commonly allowed for the offsetting of war casualties through the adoption of enemy captives into the tribe.

to collect the bounty being offered there for returned captives, she actively avoids him. She hides in an abandoned cabin for three days to escape him, and remarks: "I was fully determined not to be redeemed at that time, especially with his assistance" (93). When an "old king" of the tribe also threatens to take her to Niagara, regardless of the fact that the council of chiefs had decreed that she should remain among them unless it was her wish to leave, her Indian brother claims he will kill her rather than have her dragged off against her will. Although this is a frightening thought, the conclusion that must be drawn from it is that Jemison was considered as much a part of the family as if she had actual blood ties. And in fact, later in the narrative, she makes what must have been to her readers and her transcriber an astonishing statement: "[i]f he [her brother] had taken my life at the time when the avarice of the old King inclined him to procure my emancipation, it would have been done with a pure heart and from good motives" (120).

What is perhaps even more interesting about this episode is a one-sentence paragraph tacked onto the end, which seems to have almost nothing to do with the narrative itself, but which resonates strongly with Jemison's apparent state of mind at the time. She relates that "[n]ot long after this, my mother went to Johnstown, on the Mohawk river, with five prisoners, who were redeemed by Sir William Johnson, and set at liberty" (95). These were, presumably, English (or at least English speaking) captives, and yet Jemison has made no mention of them whatsoever. Moreover, she makes no comment upon herself as a fellow prisoner, suggesting that she certainly does not consider herself captive by this point. The prisoners have virtually no importance linguistically (apart from a phrase she offers earlier, in which she relates that she had plenty of English people to

talk to once she reached Genishau),[117] and she does not give any of the captives a name.

Indeed, although Jemison's linguistic assimilation was, in a sense, incomplete, since she retained her ability to speak English, the Seneca language had certainly become her mother tongue. She relates the beginning of the process of assimilation:

> My sisters would not allow me to speak English in their hearing; but remembering the charge that my dear mother gave me at the time I left her, whenever I chanced to be alone I made a business of repeating my prayer, catechism, or something I had learned in order that I might not forget my own language. By practicing in that way I retained it till I came to Genesee flats, where I soon became acquainted with English people with whom I have been almost daily in the habit of conversing. (Jemison 79)

The different uses Jemison assigns to the English and Seneca languages here are striking. She speaks of repeating prayers, catechism, or "something I had learned" to keep her English in her mind. This way of referring to her practice, in addition to her reference earlier to prayer ("I was obliged to stand up before my mother and repeat some words that I suppose was a prayer" (66)) suggests the repetition of words whose purpose, although not altogether lost, was reduced to rote recitation rather than communication.

Certainly once she had regular contact with English-speakers again the language regained a more communicative meaning; it must have, for she uses it to dictate this narrative. However, in the section of her story that mentions language most specifically, the use and nature of English stands in sharp contrast to the way she describes the Indian dialect that she learned: "My sisters were diligent in teaching me their language; and to their great satisfaction I soon learned so that I could understand it readily, and speak it

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[117] Jemison notes fairly early in her narrative that when some captives are brought to the Indian village where she lives, "they made [her] situation much more agreeable, as they could all speak English" (81).

fluently" (Jemison 79). The Indian language she learns, then, becomes the language of understanding and communication for her–her mother tongue–but she still remains as conversant with English as she needs to be, giving her roots in both communities and contributing to not an "either-or" subjective placement, as many critics have tried to suggest, but rather a "both-and" placement, which emphasizes her position in the middle ground and enables her to speak in and to both cultures.

Jemison's description of her life and what contributed to her emotional state of mind bears close examination and comparison with both Rowlandson's experience, and, strangely, Ophelia's. "Being now settled and provided with a home," she says, "I was employed in nursing the children, and doing light work about the house. Occasionally I was sent out with the Indian hunters, when they went but a short distance, to help them carry their game. My situation was easy; I had no particular hardships to endure. But still, the recollection of my parents, my brothers and sisters, my home, and my own captivity, destroyed my happiness, and made me constantly solitary, lonesome and gloomy" (78). The rhetorical distinction here is important. The events of her captivity do not make her unhappy, but rather her recollection of her former life and family does. In the same way that Ophelia is happy in her captive situation unless and until she begins to meditate on her "home" in Wales and the aunt left behind there, Jemison seems quite ready to call her own situation happy except when her memories of a former life intrude. And in a kind of sympathy with Rowlandson, Jemison here places a distinct emphasis on her own thought processes rather than on her situation when she looks for the source of her unhappiness.

One of the only qualifications of the contentment Jemison feels in her life comes

when she reminisces about her birth family, but even this qualification is itself qualified:

> One thing only marred my happiness, while I lived with them on the Ohio; and that was the recollection that I had once had tender parents and a home that I loved. Aside from that consideration, or, if I had been taken in infancy, I should have been contented in my situation. (85)

This passage places a time limit on the marring of her happiness by specifying that it relates to the time she spent on the Ohio. In addition, the double qualification–and particularly the suggestion that capture in infancy would have annulled her discomfort entirely–establishes firmly the idea that culture is a matter of nurture, rather than nature. Furthermore, these comments are followed by the assertion that "it is a fact that they [Indians] are naturally kind, tender and peaceable towards their friends, and strictly honest; and that those cruelties have been practiced, only upon their enemies, according to their idea of justice" (85).

It is also followed by what amounts to an admission that whatever white family she had left behind her, Jemison had found a replacement in her Indian family. Referring to the Seneca, Jemison notes that not only does she find it "impossible . . . to suppress a sigh of regret on parting with those who had truly been my friends," she also notes that a part of "our family" was living at Genishau, whence she, her child, her husband, and her "two Indian brothers" were headed. Although she distinguishes her "Indian mother" from her birth mother, she remarks of her Indian sisters that "I am constrained to believe that I loved them as I should have loved my own sister had she lived, and I had been brought up with her" (89). The glance away from her sister's death, the reduction of the horror of her sister's murder to a simple expression of her "not having lived," certainly draws attention to the extent to which Jemison has bonded with and accepted the ways of the people

around her. There is no blame in her tone, nor any sense of a need for retribution. Also absent is the kind of Christian rationalization and typological referencing Rowlandson uses to organize her world; rather, there seems to be a deep understanding of the "Indian justice" which Jemison, to some extent, defends.

Jemison's first marriage, to a Delaware brave, sparks a very linguistically interesting passage: "Not long after the Delawares came to live with us, at Wiishto," she reports, "my sisters told me that I must go and live with one of them, whose name was She-nin-jee. Not daring to cross them or disobey their commands, with a great degree of reluctance I went; and Sheninjee and I were married according to Indian custom" (Jemison 81). Although her reluctance in the face of this marriage *seems* to be based on deep-rooted feelings about miscegenation ("Yet, Sheninjee was an Indian. The idea of spending my days with him, at first seemed perfectly irreconcilable to my feelings" (82)), Jemison's ability to adapt allows her to adjust quickly to this turn of fortune, and she explains that "his good nature, generosity, tenderness, and friendship towards me, soon gained my affection; and, strange as it may seem, I loved him! To me he was ever kind in sickness, and always treated me with gentleness; in fact, he was an agreeable husband, and a comfortable companion" (82).Jemison's celebration of her husband's civility undermines any suggestion that her reluctance has specifically racial roots.

Furthermore, Walsh comments that the "matter-of-factness" with which Jemison relates the advent of her second marriage (to a man named Hiokatoo) and the list of children from it "would seem to remove lingering doubts that Jemison harbored any vestigial desire to detach herself from the Seneca" (Walsh 56). It is also signal, as Walsh

points out, that Jemison pairs the tales about Hiokatoo's violent war-faring with anecdotes about a brutal white man, Ebenezer "Indian" Allen, whose "savagery" at least matches that of Hiokatoo, as well as with a highly sympathetic Indian, Cornplanter, who captures his (white) father merely to talk to him, and then lets him go. Whatever remorse Allen feels for his crimes (some of which are described in brutal detail) and his dubious morality (he was a bigamist and a thief, amongst other things), his actions, as Walsh points out, suggest both that savagery is not exclusive to Indians and that through repentance, wartime violence can be stopped from criminalizing the man (Walsh 61).[118] In turn, Cornplanter's gentle treatment of his father also establishes that mercy and compassion are not the exclusive domains of Euro-Americans. Seen in concert, these two stories implicitly suggest that the difference between a civilized person and a brutal one cannot be reduced to race.

Interestingly, some of the same kinds of linguistic slippage that happen in Rowlandson's narrative happen in Jemison's as well. When she arrives in Genishau with her brothers and her infant son, Jemison finds the warriors there preparing for battle. In a style that is curiously detached, the narrative refers to *all* parties in the third person; Jemison seems to identify herself with none of them. She is not a part of "the Indians of that tribe," making preparations for battle; she is certainly not "the French," whom the Indians are joining. Neither is she part of "the British," whom she refers to with pronouns

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[118]Karen Oakes suggests that "we should question whether this particular report reflects Jemison's sense that whites are often more cruel than Indians or Seaver's continuing assumption that life among the Indians makes whites savage" (46). Given Jemison's apparent lack of "savagery," Seaver's assumption certainly seems somewhat tenuous.

like "they" and "themselves," excluding herself from their party as well. However, she relates the result of the battle with some pride:

> Not a single man escaped being driven off, and of the whole number one only was fortunate enough to escape with his life. Our Indians were absent but a few days, and returned in triumph, bringing with them two white prisoners, and a number of oxen. Those were the first neat cattle that were ever brought to the Genesee flats. (91)

Although there seems to be a rhetorical distinction between "men" and "Indians," the pronoun "our" certainly links Jemison more strongly to her Indian relatives than to the Europeans, particularly since she clearly views this battle as a triumph.

This detachment from European cultural groups might be attributed to the scribeship of Seaver, who by 1824 would not have considered himself French or British. However, when Jemison later begins to describe the onset of the Revolutionary War, she makes at least as clear a distinction between herself and Americans, calling them "the people of the States." Although the text still refers to "the Indians" in the third person, Jemison at the outset of the chapter refers to "our tribe," treading a line between identification with them and an almost proprietary pride (96-97). Furthermore, when she relates some of the events surrounding the fight with General Sullivan's army, the Americans become–in an apparently unselfconscious textual move on her part, "the enemy" (103). And as she relates the burning of her village by Sullivan's army, the text describes an absolute "us and them" dichotomy, with the Indians firmly identified as "us":

> In one or two days after the skirmish at Connissius lake, Sullivan and his army arrived at Genesee river, where they destroyed every article of the food kind that they could lay their hands on. A part of our corn they burnt, and threw the remainder into the river. They burnt our houses, killed what few cattle and horses they could find, destroyed our fruit trees, and left nothing but the bare soil and timber. But the Indians had eloped and were

not to be found. (104)

The last sentence of this paragraph is rather startling, as it introduces a third-person pronoun to refer to a people about whom Jemison had presumably been speaking in an inclusive plural first-person voice. In this case, at least, the voice of Jemison herself and the voice of her transcriber can, with some confidence, be distinguished through this sudden shift.

This sets up a tension between the voices of Seaver and of Jemison that is further tightened by Jemison's description of the torture and death of two captives. The execution, the text says, is "one of the highest kind of frolics ever celebrated in *their* tribe" (emphasis added) clearly setting Jemison apart from what, to the English, was considered barbarism. However, the text also records that Jemison "felt a kind of anxiety to witness the scene, having never attended an execution," even though she also feels, she says, "a kind of horrid dread that made my heart revolt, and inclined me to step back rather than support the idea of advancing" (93). Thus Jemison seems to be caught here between her "anxiety" (which, given her explanation of it, seems to amount either to curiosity or to a will to participate in her adoptive culture) and an unexplained dread which, although it might be due to her childhood upbringing, might just as easily be due to an unease she feels at wanting to participate so fully in the culture of the Indian people.

Whatever the case, one of her sisters states that she wishes to go to the execution, and proposes bringing Jemison with her. Curiously (and this is frequently altered in the later fictionalizations, for obvious reasons), Jemison herself does not protest this. There is no record of her resistance to the idea at all, and it is altogether possible, given her

previous admissions of curiosity and interest, that she may have gone, except that her Indian mother protests:

> How, my daughter, (said she, addressing my sister,) how can you even think of attending the feast and seeing the unspeakable torments that those poor unfortunate prisoners must inevitably suffer from the hands of our warriors? How can you stand to see them writhing in the warriors' fire, in all the agonies of a slow, a lingering death? How can you think of enduring the sound of their groanings and prayers to the Great Spirit for sudden deliverance from their enemies, or from life? And how can you think of conducting to that melancholy spot your poor sister Dickewamis, (meaning myself), who has so lately been a prisoner, who has lost her parents and brothers by the hands of the bloody warriors, and who has felt all the horrors of the loss of her freedom, in lonesome captivity? Oh! how can you think of making her bleed at the wounds which are now but partially healed? The recollection of her former troubles would deprive us of Dickewamis, and she would depart to the fields of the blessed. (91-92) [119]

With all this, the mother seems to think she needs yet more convincing arguments, and so she ends on a note familiar to readers in 1824: "With war we have nothing to do: our husbands and brothers are proud to defend us, and their hearts beat with ardor to meet our proud foes. Oh! stay then, my daughter; let our warriors alone perform on their victims their customs of war!" (92).

Given that women of the Seneca had the ability and the power to decide whether captives lived or died, it seems somewhat suspicious that a Seneca woman would deter her daughter from attending an execution based on a very European-American version of the

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[119] Susan Walsh reads this passage as straight from Jemison's lips, suggesting that it was "the familiar scene of a mother's instruction" and attributing it to the lack of "absolute consensus among the Senecas about the appropriate measures of retaliation against enemies captured to replace, or be killed in recompense for, lost tribal members" (58), but given the words surrounding it and Jemison's own feelings, this claim seems tenuous, particularly since women regularly participated in and attended such tortures and executions.

idea of separate spheres, particularly given that Jemison seem to have seriously considered attending. As well, given that the torture of a captive was a test of honor, and not a gratuitous practice of cruelty, the idea that women should not see the captives suffer also seems somewhat suspicious. Furthermore, Jemison's own desire to attend gives lie to the idea that the horror of the event would kill her. Perhaps most interestingly, these words and the resistance to attending the execution come not from Jemison but from her Indian mother. And when the text says that they had "their desired effect" (92), there is no evidence that the desire not to go rested with Jemison. This section reads very much like a heroic attempt on the part of the transcriber to somehow soften the effect of Jemison's near decision to attend the torture of two English captives–captives she "should" have been fully in sympathy with. Whatever the case, the reservations Jemison's Indian mother has concerning her attendance of this event appear to be personal, rather than racial (or even cultural), and what is perhaps most interesting about this passage is the influence of Seaver's voice and his tendency toward a highly literary style reminiscent of James Fenimore Cooper. Frequently, as with this passage, the tension between Seaver's and Jemison's styles and the conflict between their world views combine to highlight the tug-of-war in the text over the narrative itself and the purpose of its publication.

II. Resisting Re-Interpretation

With the complex collaborative authorship of this narrative, how is it possible for Mary Jemison to assert her own sense of self while talking, essentially, out of someone

else's mouth? Scheckel observes that the narrative "includes within a single text material that could not easily originate from a single perspective" and although she concludes, somewhat controversially, that the result is a "logically consistent story line," she also notes that by "representing Mary Jemison comfortably 'at home' between two worlds–and by embodying within the text itself a narrative space where different world visions and narrative perspectives meet–this unusual text offers the white culture that appropriates it a way to stabilize and symbolically enter into the frontier realm that Jemison inhabits" (Scheckel 96-97). According to Scheckel, then, the frontier between cultures becomes, as Jemison inhabits it, an inhabitable space.

To leave the role of the text here, however, is to stop before the function of the text is fully explored. Scheckel's rhetoric betrays an ideological outlook that imposes crucial limitations on the interpretation of Jemison's story. It suggests that Jemison's work finally serves colonialist ends by taming the frontier, somehow paving the way for a western expansionism that in the end defines in terms of both geography and citizenship[120] the boundaries within which Jemison must live–boundaries much more confining than the ones she finds in Seneca culture.[121] But Jemison's narrative resists being "between

[120] The restrictions regarding Jemison's citizenship where the U.S. government was concerned are made clear in the negotiations surrounding her land claim. After a small skirmish in council, she is awarded her land, but only "under the same restrictions and regulations that *other* Indian lands are subject to" (121, emphasis added). The government clearly identified her as wholly Indian and, in a strange irony, Jemison had to be "naturalized" as an American citizen in order to keep title to her land.

[121] Although, as Namias remarks, "Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century North American sources often depicted Indian women as inferior drudges who dragged around heavy loads and did most of the work while Indian men lolled about and had a good time" (Namias 1992: 19), the reality was much different. Women of the Seneca had extensive

worlds," and identifying differences between Euro-Americans and the Seneca in racial terms. Instead, Jemison's understanding of identity as cultural rather than racial, making integration a far more natural process, renders her presence and role in the narrative disturbing, rather than "comfortable," for Seaver. However much Seaver wishes to contend that Jemison looks back to and recollects something "she once was," in the end her resisting voice insists upon presenting herself *as she is*, rejecting the idea that her position is a conflicted one. The tension in the narrative, then, is not so much between Native and Euro-Americans, but rather between the two voices vying for final authority in the narrative.

The story Jemison told was, through the very method of its recording, altered by the bias of her scribe. Seaver's project, as Namias and others have described, was a classic subversion-containment manoeuver, and consisted essentially in writing/reading her as a captive white woman in a savage culture. In his "Author's Preface," Seaver "fondly hope[s] that the lessons of distress that are portrayed, may have a direct tendency to increase our love of liberty; to enlarge our views of the blessings that are derived from our liberal institutions; and to excite in our breasts sentiments of devotion and gratitude to the great Author and finisher of our happiness" (Seaver, Author's Preface: 52). As well, as Scheckel observes, Seaver places Jemison's story amongst a very particular kind of

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social, political, and economic power. They shared knowledge of healing powers with men, chose male war council members, and could remove them. They took an active role in the leadership of tribal spirituality and lived in a society that was entirely matrilineal (Namias 1992: 20-21). As Colin Calloway reports, "[m]any women appear to have found life in an Indian community more rewarding than the isolation and hard work that was the common lot of a wife on the colonial frontier" (Calloway 72).

captivity narrative, suggesting that it is one of "the stories of Indian cruelties which were common in the new settlements." However, Scheckel also notes that "Jemison's narrative, with its sympathetic account of Indian Life and her willing accommodation to it, is hardly what Seaver's introduction would lead the reader to expect" (Scheckel 93).

Perhaps one of the most visible locations where the conflict between Seaver's ideology and Jemison's resistance meets the conflict between their styles of narration occurs when Seaver describes captivity itself as a concept:

> The bare loss of liberty is but a mere trifle when compared with the circumstances that necessarily attend, and are inseparably connected with it. It is the recollection of what we once were, of the friends, the home, and the pleasures we have left or lost; the anticipation of misery, the appearance of wretchedness, the anxiety for freedom, the hope of release, the devising of means of escaping, and the vigilance with which we watch our keepers, that constitute the nauseous dregs of the bitter cup of slavery. I am sensible, however, that no one can pass from a state of freedom to that of slavery, and in the last situation rest perfectly contented; but as every one knows that great exertions of the mind tend directly to debilitate the body, it will appear obvious that we ought, when confined, to exert all our faculties to promote our present comfort, and let future days provide their own sacrifices. In regard to ourselves, just as we feel, we are. . . . I have never once been sick till within a year or two, only as I have related. (157-58)

As Scheckel notes, this passage, "with its conventional sentiments and phrasing, is hardly remarkable" for a romantic literary text. But the schism between the narrator's voice and the scriptor's goes deeper than mere style here, and is made most visible, strangely, by the most difficult sentiment to attribute with any certainty. "In regard to ourselves," says the text, "just as we feel, we are." For Seaver, living out Jemison's capture and life with the Seneca vicariously as she narrates it to him, the idea that a white woman would *not* have felt the sentiments he describes would have been unimaginable. These sentiments,

according to this passage, are what define an individual, and for Seaver, defining Jemison as wholly white (and therefore still a captive) is of primary importance. This suggests an understanding of identity–at least white feminine identity–as being based on race, an understanding that Jemison's story, and her relation of her feelings, consistently resists.

The diction of this particular passage is so clearly a part of literary discourse–its flowery style unlike that of native oral storytelling–that it is difficult to believe it consistently and accurately represents Jemison's own thoughts. Scepticism on this point is justified by the fact that, as Scheckel observes, "Mary Jemison, far from anxiously seeking to escape her captors, actually praises her life among the Indians and repeatedly refuses to return to the white society, even when encouraged to do so by members of her adopted tribe" (Scheckel 96). In addition, rather than "nauseous dregs from a bitter cup," Jemison's memories of her birth family seem warm and reminiscent. And at no point does she ever refer to her life with the Indians as "slavery." The fact that Seaver makes these assumptions about Jemison's interpretation of her life and rather roughly superimposes them onto the narrative, especially in light of Jemison's description of Indian life, suggests not that she has felt confined, but that Seaver feels she ought to have–which tells us far more about Seaver's understanding of Jemison's identity than about Jemison's sense of herself.

Part of the reason for Seaver's obvious discomfort with Jemison's *lack* of discomfort comes from the way in which Euro-American culture differed in its perceptions of how white women and men could negotiate their identities in the world of the American frontier. Western New York itself was what Richard White terms a "middle ground," a

place where acculturation is replaced by cultural accommodation. Unlike acculturation, which White describes as "a process in which one group becomes more like another by borrowing discrete cultural traits," cultural accommodation, which certainly involves cultural change, is closely linked to the fact that it takes place not in conditions where "a dominant group is largely able to dictate correct behavior to a subordinate group" but rather in the middle ground, "the place in between: in between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the nonstate world of villages . . . . It is the area between the historical foreground of European invasion and occupation and the background of Indian defeat and retreat" (White x).

This middle position leads to a strangely mixed culture that seems quite natural to those living within it, where

> diverse peoples adjust their differences through what amounts to a process of creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings. People try to persuade others who are different from themselves by appealing to what they perceive to be the values and practices of those others. They often misinterpret and distort both the values and the practices of those they deal with, but from these misunderstandings arise new meanings and through them new practices–the shared meanings and practices of the middle ground. (White x)

The extent to which these misunderstandings influence both Euro-Americans' perception of difference and Seaver's perception of Jemison impact strongly on the recording of Jemison's story, and illustrate the extent to which the middle ground tended to be reserved for the masculine gender.

Survival on the part of settlers to some extent depended on abilities that were not "civilized" but "Indian." This leads to the frontier often being described as a liminal space where the worlds of the Indian and the white meet and clash. However, particularly as the

Eighteenth-century progressed into the nineteenth, the myth of the American frontiersman enshrined in Cooper's Leather-Stocking Tales and epitomized in characters such as Natty Bumppo began to suggest that the racial boundaries were less impermeable than they had been purported to be. Rather than suggesting a devolution to a primitive state, "out-Indianing the Indians" paradoxically seems to confirm both the masculinity and the whiteness of the male character, although it does largely remove him from the realm of the dramatic romance interest (filled, for example, by Duncan *The Last of the Mohicans*). Instead, Bumppo epitomizes the true "Romantic" hero in that he becomes a son of nature–even a "son" of Chingachgook–in the tradition of Walt Whitman rather than Walter Scott.

With women, by contrast, the differences between Indian and Euro-Americans were far more likely to be expressed in racial terms. Even Cooper's already-racially-impure Cora in *The Last of the Mohicans* is not, in the end, permitted to marry Uncas; miscegenation is far too present a threat. The various literary renderings of Hannah Dustan's narrative illustrate the extent to which ideas about white feminine identity remained incompatible with the freedom granted to men as leather-stocking heroes. In Dustan's original account, recorded by Cotton Mather in "Dux Foemina Facti,"[122] Dustan's use of a quintessentially Indian weapon, the tomahawk, to slay her captors goes almost unremarked, and the slaughter itself (and the scalping she, and performs) is lauded as Dustan is hailed as a new Jaël. However, by the time her story is interpreted by Hawthorne in "The Dustin Family" (in *Sketches and Essays* (1836), and Thoreau in *A*

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[122] See p.29 n.7

Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (1849) any sympathy for the heroine is transformed into a profound distaste for her actions. Hawthorne's attitude toward Dustan is appreciative only until she picks up a tomahawk. Then, in an abrupt change in tone, he suggests that the island where she killed and scalped her captors "should be held accursed, for her sake." He proceeds to call her a "bloody old hag" and wishes she had been drowned in the river or starved to death, "and nothing ever seen of her again, save her skeleton, with the ten scalps twisted round it for a girdle." Nowhere does Mather mention that Dustan wore the scalps she took around her waist, and to suggest that she did, particularly since Hawthorne mentions no other clothing in conjunction with her "skeleton," implies that Dustan, as far as he is concerned, has "gone native." Indians, it was believed, wore scalps, not whites, and Dustan's actions here seem to actually change the racial status of that "awful woman" and "raging tigress" in Hawthorne's eyes.

Thoreau's account of the same story is more subtle, but sends much the same message. He suggests that the little group, consisting of Dustan, her nurse, and a young boy who is also a captive, collected the scalps only to prove the events of their captivity and escape, but he also goes on to suggest that their (and particularly Dustan's as the ringleader) racial identities have actually altered as a result of their actions. As they escape down the river, the "stolen birch" canoe they use "forgets its master and does them good service," intimating that they are virtually indistinguishable from the Indians whom they killed and from whom the canoe comes. Even more damning is Thoreau's assertion that "[t]hey do not stop to cook their meals upon the bank," the absence of cooking hinting at degeneration to an almost animalistic state.

In contrast to Hawthorne's and Thoreau's accounts, Jemison's text indicates that she considers the kinds of "racial" differences they describe to be cultural, and that like the geographical territory she inhabits, her identity rests in a middle ground that becomes, for her, quite natural. As has already been pointed out, it is difficult to tell where Jemison's voice stops and Seaver's begins. Nevertheless, the two voices need to be considered as different, if not entirely separate, if only because together they produce the most astonishing tensions:

> I have seen, in a number of instances, the effects of education upon some of our Indians, who were taken when young, from their families, and placed at school before they had an opportunity to contract Indian habits, and there kept till they arrived to manhood, but I have never seen one of those but what was an Indian in every respect after he returned. Indians must and will be Indians, in spite of all the means that can be used for their cultivation in the sciences and arts. (Jemison 85)

Here the text indicates very clearly that an Indian simply cannot become white, which seems to be an attempt to clearly differentiate between the two cultures. On the other hand, no matter how clearly she speaks the English language, given Jemison's status, her education, her way of life, and her gender, it might be permissible to doubt that she would formulate a sentence like "Indians must and will be Indians, in spite of all the means that can be used for their cultivation in the sciences and arts." Rather, this sounds very much like the voice of a Euro-American scribe whose faith in the idea of separate races must have been gravely shaken by the obvious ease with which this small woman had integrated fully with an Indian culture.[123] Women, it seems, were not generally allowed to wear

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[123] Namias suggests that Jemison is simply mourning the attempt at acculturation and its effects, which is also plausible, given Seaver's general tendency to render her statements more florid.

leather stockings.

III. Critical Legacies

The changing roles of women and the decreasing fear of miscegenation due to the crushing subjection of Native Americans at the beginning of the twentieth century have, in the end, simultaneously revived Jemison's fame and undermined her achievement. Ironically, the statue of Jemison that William Prior Letchworth and H. K. Bush-Brown erected in 1910 celebrates the absolute opposite of the collective values Jemison's close association with and obvious familial feelings for the Seneca suggest.

Jemison's use of "our" frequently throughout the narrative, although it has the curious effect of including both her transcriber and her reader in her world, has roots in the nature of her Seneca society. Kinships were extremely important and people lived in groups in which individuals depended upon the whole for survival.[124] Although she frequently speaks of "our Indians," which almost gives a sense of proprietorship and certainly marks the difference between "Indians" and others (presumably white), perhaps one of the more poignant moments in the narrative comes when Jemison explains about the discovery of a grave site after a mudslide: "When I first came to Genishau, the bank of Fall Brook had just slid off and exposed a large number of human bones, which the Indians said were buried there long before their fathers ever saw the place; and that they did not

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[124] This is a marked departure from her early life, in which the nearest neighbors might be a mile or more away.

know what kind of people they were. It however was and is believed by our people, that they were not Indians" (122). This is the first time that Jemison refers to the Indians as her own people, and to herself as a full member of their culture.

In contrast, the statue of Jemison, as Namias notes, is fundamentally and monumentally white despite the Indian clothing on it ("the final statue looks like a Nordic woman dressed Indian-style"), and depicts Jemison alone with a cradle board, suggesting that she made the six hundred mile journey she recounts from Ohio to New York by herself. In fact, her Indian brothers accompanied and cared for her on the way. Namias observes: "Letchworth and Bush-Brown celebrated the white and Euro-American values they saw Jemison representing: individuality, perseverance, the need to go it alone" (Namias 1993: 163). In a sense, the statue invests her with the same kind of leather stockings Natty Bumppo wears.

On the other hand, the very existence of this statue counters the words of Leslie Fiedler, who claims that "[s]uch a figure as Mary Jemison remains mythologically inert precisely because she married Red, wed not one but two Indians, and produced several children who became leaders in their tribe" (95-96). However, he seems to claim this in the face of extraordinary evidence to the contrary. He even exclaims that "[h]istory may record, but legend does not choose to remember, that she finally went native enough nearly to forget her own English tongue, and to look on cooly as the entrails of a white captive were drawn out through a small hole in his belly . . . . She remains as irrelevant as those eccentric males who resented rather than rejoiced in their captivity" (Fiedler 96). Fiedler was, of course, writing in 1968, but even so, the myth of Mary Jemison had

remained alive and well, and even at the time was anything but stagnant, with the publication in 1941 of Lenski's children's narrative, and in 1966 of Gardner's.

Although Fiedler lumps together "Mary Jemison and Mary Rowlandson and Mary Johnson and Mary Kinnan, and Elizabeth Hanson and Mercy Horbison and Hannah Swarton and Hannah Duston" and claims that "[w]hat really counts is the composite image created finally in any mind which tries to evoke one by one the succession of Marys and Mercys and Elizabeths and Hannahs . . . .Together they constitute the true anti-Pocahontas: . . . . the Great WASP Mother of Us All, who, far from achieving a reconciliation between White men and Red, turns the weapon of the Indian against him in a final act of vengeance" (Fiedler 95), such sweeping statements really have little accuracy or relevance, and tell us much more about the discomfort of the critic than the function of the narratives under investigation. Such statements also do the work of erasing the individuality of each woman, and of rendering each of them disposable as individuals, subsumed by a strange mythological figure whose role seems relevant only to some few of them, if any. Jemison's greatest achievement in recording her life is exactly the recording–even in the process of encoding it in text–of a single reconciliation of a life that has not been purely white or red, but has been deeply and profoundly lived.

The erasure typified by Fiedler's statements began, in fact, even with the publication of Jemison's work. We know, for example, that from the beginning Seaver claimed the story as his own. Although the typeface in which his name is set on the title page of the first edition is not as bold or as ornate as that which inscribes Jemison's, he

clearly marks the text as being "By James E. Seaver,"[125] and proclaims his status in the titles of the "Author's Preface" and the "Author's Introduction." Of course, this claim is one the illiterate Jemison could not have disputed. On the other hand, the need for Jemison's physical presence and for her voice in order for this story to be told disputes, in and of itself, Seaver's bold claim. Her choice to stay with her captors and eventually to marry into the tribe is not particularly unusual in the history of American "Indian Captivities," but it is by definition in terms of captivity narratives. Jemison's will to tell her story in a format that would cross cultural boundaries seems exceptional, at least for a woman narrator.[126]

Certainly the story found a market. Between 1824 and 1931 there were twenty-seven printings and twenty-three editions "ranging from 32 to 483 pages." The story is retold over and over, even as a children's narrative.[127] In fact, even as I write another children's version, strangely and ironically titled *The Diary of Mary Jemison (In My Own*

[125] Namias notes that the title page has Seaver claiming that the story is "taken from her own words," and that the emphasis should really be on "taken from." But she also notes that Seaver's brother, who took over the project at Seaver's death after the first edition, further corrupted Jemison's text, emphasizing her whiteness and the differences between herself and her captors. In three added chapters all purported to be Jemison's own narrative in her own voice, there is an obvious effort to turn the narrative into a defense of the invasion of Iroquois territory (Namias 1992: 38-39).

[126] As Namias notes, "[b]eginning with a substantial climb up the steep canyon from her house along the river, eighty-year-old Jemison walked four miles to see Seaver. . . . Clearly she would not have traveled that distance at her age if she did not want to tell her story" (Namias 1993: 187).

[127] Seaver, in his "Author's Preface," lays the groundwork for the use of this text as a children's story by commenting that "books of this kind are sought and read with avidity, especially by children, and are well calculated to excite their attention, inform their understanding, and improve them in the art of reading" (50-51).

Words) is leaving the press and being prepared for sale.[128] In addition, the romanticized versions of capture by Indians in popular pulp fiction guise turn up at airports and drugstores everywhere. In the midst of this creation and recreation, the exact nature of Jemison's achievement may be overlooked. The three days that she spent relating the events of her life to James Seaver triggered Jemison's transformation into an almost legendary figure. Perhaps unwittingly, she gained the kind of immortality Margaret Cavendish dreamed of all her life, in that her experiences were validated not just by her first audience (Seaver) but by thousands of others, over what has now become nearly two centuries.

But as Namias notes, "Mary Jemison is not just a figure of history, dead, buried, and reburied, with a statue over her. Iroquois people still know her . . . . She has a great many living descendants, especially in western New York and in southern Canada. To these descendants and to Iroquois people, she is a very real figure affirming the possibility that whites and Indians might have lived together peacefully." Although this assertion is dangerously broad, it does shed light on a marked cultural difference which explains to some extent the fact that leather-stocking heroes maintained their white identity in spite of their "Native" abilities. Although the notion of a collective or family identity was superseded, particularly in frontier America, by the image of the individual, independent almost to the point of isolation, it remained an important feature of Native life. As Paula Gunn Allen notes, "[t]he white Anglo-Saxon Protestant ethos holds that isolate, self-

[128] *The Diary of Mary Jemison (In My Own Words)* by Connie and Peter Roop. Benchmark Books, 2000.

reliant, and self-motivated individuals formulate and render experience personal, profiting thereby . . . . it is the difference in perception of the significance of a people's collective experience that distinguishes American Indian short stories from non-Indian American ones" (Allen 5). She adds that the "concentration on the negative effect of individuality forms a major theme in the oral literatures of all tribes" (Allen 5). "Singularity," she says, "is antithetical to community," and for Indians, "relationships are based on commonalities of consciousness . . . . individualism (as distinct from autonomy or self-responsibility) becomes a negatively valued trait" (Allen 9). In contrast, white characters such as Bumppo are emphatically *not* tribal but independent loners. Seaver, and later Letchworth and Bush-Brown, attempt to duplicate this independent individualism in Jemison by trying to impose racial differences between herself and her adopted family–differences her own words consistently resist and redefine.

Part of the commonality of consciousness Allen mentions comes from a exclusively oral tradition of storytelling–a tradition that Seaver could not comprehend–wherein all history and religious knowledge requires a face-to-face audience to survive, as opposed to the individual and often isolated or distant readers assumed by written texts. Oakes notes that "Using European American *literary* apparatus of preface, introduction, and appendices, [Seaver] calls into question the truth-value of Jemison's *oral* history by impugning her memory on two occasions before the story even begins . . . . His assumption of a memory diminished by age is especially problematic regarding a Seneca woman whose cultural role it was to preserve tradition through oral transmission" (Oakes 49). Even today western academics tend to have trouble acknowledging the authority of

oral discourse. The tradition of assuming Jemison's voice to be somehow faulty continues, and does a disservice to Jemison's narrative and to other Native autobiographies written in the as-told-to format. Gelles comments that "[t]hree narrators speak in this [the Namias] edition; two of them are strongly authentic" (105). These two, Gelles claims, are Namias herself, who sets the tale up in her introduction, and James Seaver, whom Gelles calls "an authentic nineteenth-century ethnographic observer" (105). Of Jemison herself, Gelles claims, "[h]ers is a powerful story, painful for many reasons. But it is not authentic." She qualifies and explains this rather abrupt judgement by stating that "[b]ecause it is 'as told to', the language, even the slant is frequently that of Seaver. The stuff of a nineteenth-century sentimental novel, Seaver's graceful narration, but moreover his bias, is evident" (105).

To speak of Jemison's narrative voice as "inauthentic" is to rob it of its authority (and Jemison of her authorship). Even though Seaver claims the creative role, it is clear that the life and the story attached to it, however much we may need to read between the lines to come up with it, belong to Jemison, who must be accepted as the authority on herself. That she used the only means possible to have her story fixed in print should not be reason to suspect her voice of inauthenticity. In fact, paraphrasing Allen, Oakes notes that "Native Americans do not value purity as do Westerners, and their art and their lives (again artificially separated) reflect an interwoven, noncategorical perspective" (Oakes 45). And although, as Arnold Krupat states, collaborative autobiographies were often produced as "an acknowledgment of Indian defeat, in the ideological service of progressive expansionism" (qtd. in Walsh 67) as Susan Walsh remarks, "they nevertheless

helped to challenge that expansionism 'by admitting an Indian to the ranks of the self-represented'" (Walsh 67). Thus we must attempt, as Walsh also suggests, to find the places where "perspectives and agendas . . . are in clearest conflict," or we will risk dismissing "the very idea of an Indian subject position" and ignoring "the possibility of voices, perspectives, and narrative traditions in opposition to the progressivist ideology of well-intentioned white editors" (Walsh 51).

Certainly Jemison has entered the realm of the self-represented, and has even reached the realm of folklore; at the time of her recounting of her narrative to James Seaver, she was already referred to as "the White Woman of the Genesee." But Namias asks, at the end of a thorough and fascinating paper, "Was Jemison the *White* woman, the white *Woman*, or the *Indian Woman*?" (1993: 201). In the end, she reads the story itself "like a triangular crystal prism. Each side offers a way of looking through the object. In the case of the prism, each side is identical; in Jemison's case, each side gives a different perspective" (1993: 201) and it is this combination, this multiplicity of simultaneous perspectives that gives this narrative and its speaker their strength. Often called a 'heroic figure', "Mary Jemison not only violates racial boundaries but even praises her Indian husbands. This aspect of her story might add to her interest for readers as an outlaw figure who ventures into forbidden territory and enjoys personal freedoms beyond those generally available or permissible according to mainstream social conventions" (Scheckel 99).[129] Like Natty Bumppo, Jemison's position in a middle ground gives her "an unusual

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[129] Scheckel also notes that "[i]f Jemison were seen as locating her loyalties and identity entirely in the Indian world, she would be considered either an outlaw, whose transference of racial allegiance would make her opposed to white values, or an outsider.

power to negotiate between Indian and white worlds without ever being defined as a threat to white culture–either through . . . absolute opposition to it or by bringing into white society unacceptable attitudes or experiences produced by . . . close association with the Indians and the wilderness" (Scheckel 100).

Although some of the mythology of Jemison is ranged around what Namias refers to as "the banner of white female sensibility" (1993: 166), her very re-emergence in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries (if, indeed, she can be said to have ever submerged) is testament to the incredible complexity of her position. Her initial mythology may have been due to Seaver's sentimentalization, but her lasting power lies in her stature as a figure in the middle ground–the stuff of legends. Indeed, Namias even refers to her narrative as "an epic story setting a woman at the center of a New World cosmic drama" (Namias 1993: 171).

Just as classical heroic and legendary figures such as Hercules straddled the worlds of Olympus and Earth, and just as Native legendary figures bridge the gap between the supernatural world of animals and animal spirits and that of humans, Jemison's narrative and, in the end, her 'self' bridge the (much smaller and more artificial) gap between two cultures, making hers a subjectivity embedded in a myth which, if not entirely of her own making, was surely made in a way she would have understood. Namias notes that Jemison's transcribed account has now transcended its boundaries and has once again

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whose severance of all ties to the white world would make her irrelevant to it. On the other hand, if she actually tried to reintegrate into white society, her experiences among the Indians–especially her violation of racial and sexual boundaries–well might cause some difficulties" (101).

become oral: "[a] group of about thirty gathered around the Jemison statue while a park historian gave his weekly recounting of her story and her place in the Indian life of the region" (Namias 1993: 148). Undoubtedly this re-translation to the oral, and even her story itself might not have crossed the cultural boundary had Jemison not walked the four miles to James Seaver's cabin and spent her three days there. In doing so, she ensured her position as a bridging figure–not unlike the trickster–and became a lasting element of the folklore of two cultures.

I have chosen the story of Mary Jemison to conclude this project because her situation and her experiences draw together many of the threads already explored here. She follows logically on the heels of Sarah Fielding's fictional heroine because like Ophelia, she never went back to her former way of life once captured and, like Ophelia, there is evidence that after a very short time she really had no inclination to do so. She married into her captors' society and, at the end of her life, her physical appearance was one of the only distinguishing features that set her apart from her Indian family. However, hers is a narrative based on actual events, and thus she follows to some extent in the footsteps of Mary Rowlandson. Her position in relation to two cultures echoes the kinds of issues dealt with by Graffigny's Zilia, while like Cavendish's narrative Jemison's works to produce a feminine subjectivity in a space that is almost mythological, raising it beyond question, reproach, or dismissal.[130]

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[130] However, this is not to suggest that Jemison held anything like the same class as Margaret Cavendish or Françoise de Graffigny. Even before her capture, Jemison could not even aspire to the lower gentry of Sarah Fielding, and her geographical location on the

In her 1993 book chapter on the Jemison narrative, Namias relates the Iroquois story of creation, in which a woman falls to earth and begins a whole new world. She is, perhaps, the original captive of place, whose role as a mediator between one culture (that of heaven) and another (earth) creates for her a position from which to speak. It certainly enables her creation of the world, and absolutely guarantees her position as a figure of mythology. Namias even comments that Jemison, "[l]ike the woman who fell onto Turtle's back, gave birth to new life, and planted a new world around herself, she found a new family, abundance, and new powers" (1993: 201). Certainly, Jemison's life is "the story of a white captive, a woman who is a survivor, a woman able to mediate between cultures" (Namias 1992: 43), and equally surely, "[t]he Iroquois certainly saw her as one of their own and still do" (Namias 1993: 149). But bringing us around full circle, her final words echo those of Mary Rowlandson, although the family she refers to would shock the earlier Mary to the core:

> If my family will live happily, and I can be exempted from trouble while I have to stay, I feel as though I could lay down in peace a life that has been checked in almost every hour, with troubles of deeper dye, than are commonly experienced by mortals. (160)

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frontier, prosperous as the Jemison farm was, excluded the kind of community placement that even Mary Rowlandson had, although Rowlandson's position is closest to Jemison's own. Jemison was the daughter of Protestant Irish Immigrant parents, born on board a ship on the way to America. Hers was a farming family, and rather than living in tightly-knit settlements and colonies as Rowlandson and her contemporaries did, her family and families like it lived spread over the frontier, where the nearest neighbors were often a good distance off.

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