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ENG 200: US Resistance

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Tensions within Mary Rowlandson's Narratives'

"A Narrative of the Captivity and Resturation of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson" in 1682 written by Mary Rowlandson. Is a captivity narrative that shows the tensions of seeing your captor as human and also being expected and seeing your captors as a threat and not human. This narrative shows how she is affected by colonialism, how her experience is used by the male leaders of her community to justify further colonialism. This is a captivity narrative which is supposed to showcase to the audience the hardships of Mary Rowlandson. From the very start it is supposed to dehumanize the indigenous captors, "it is a solemn sight to see so many christians lying in their blood, some here, and some there, like a company of sheep torn by wolves, all of them stript naked by a company of hell-hounds, roaring, singing, ranting, and insulting, as if they would have torn our very hearts out; yet the lord by his almighty power preserved a number of us from death, for there were twenty-four of us taken alive and carried captive."(Rowlandson, 252). The indigenous people are described as animals and animals only capable of action with no thought to that action. While the puritans are described as animals but a more pure animal. I think it is interesting the word choice of hell-hounds and wolves. These are uncontrollable or only controlled by hell. Which ties back to the use of faith in this narrative as a form of identity and power.

While being a captive. How her identity is endangered by being taken and removed from her puritan life as a mother and wife.(because these seem to be the only

roles she can obtain in her society) Her experiences within the different removes when they travel from different areas around Massachusetts. She meets “King Philip” who is a leader of the indigenous people who have her captive since this is the middle of “King Philip's War”. “King Philip” was a nickname by the colonialist for him. The narration helps to demonize indigenous people through the wilderness and action. The purpose of this narrative being used to justify colonialism being used over the indigenous people of the Americans. Actually European colonizers took indigenous people captive more often and that being said treated their captive horrifically, along with dehumanizing them. The European colonizers would assault, physically and sexually their captives, enslavement wasn't out of the picture. Keep in mind that colonizing is trying to extract something from someone or the land. They are displacing, replacing or controlling the indigenous people. The methods for these were indeed brutal and meant to dehumanize the indigenous populations of the lands the colonizers took and continue to take. Indigenous took captives as well, Mary is an example of this. And the indigenous also did use violence, but the purposes of their captives and their treatment was very different. There is no evidence of sexual assault and they did make there captive labor with them, but not always for the captors. Mary's attitudes towards the indigenous people that took her captive, change from fully dehumanizing her captors to talking about how much she enjoys their food, her participation within their economy, through using a skill and getting paid for it by a leader “King Philip” himself, “During my abode in this place, Philip spake to me to make a shirt for his boy, which i did, for which he gave me shilling: I offered the money to my master, but he bade me keep it: and with it I bought a piece of horse flesh. Afterwards he asked me to make a cap for his boy, for

which he invited me to dinner. I went, and he gave me a pancake, about as big as two fingers; it was made of parched wheat, beaten, and fried in bear's grease, but I thought I never tasted pleasanter meat in my life..."(Rowlandson, 260). This is so interesting because it starts to get onto the soft power of shared culture, although this is a forced proximity shared culture. The power of liking something in someone else's culture and customs can change your perceptions of them. Making them more human, by influencing the perceptions. This is from an international relations theory of hard and soft power by Joseph Nye. Hard power is forced coercion, like war, or economic sanctions to get another nation-state to bend to what you want and do what you want. But there is also soft power which is the influence and power of culture to change a state's perceptions and actions towards another state. Both are effective but one is very powerful which is soft power. It can change the reputation of an entire nation-state and reshape how they are perceived by other nation-states.

Rowlandson's narrative contains tensions of her captors representation. Though the driving Preface is written in a shaping control of the puritan Minister Increase Mather over the perspective of the reader and twists the narrative towards his own means.

The narrative is a tool and foraging of colonization in the ways that it "others" her captors, by showing them as threats of spirituality, and dehumanizing them through the eyes of puritan teachings. Depicting them as folk devils, which is like using media so this story is media for that time period. I mean the printing press is a form of media sending out mass information and printing human thoughts and experiences. This also however creates a mass ideal, it makes ideas bigger in the sense that there needs to be "popular sovereignty" with depicting them, by publishing so many printed papers

depicting the indigenous people of the area of the colonies and later the United States. This helps make a singular thought, they move through and show similar narratives of indigenous people through the media of the time and this controls the popular thoughts of colonialism.

But then the narrative switched to very human showings of indigenous people, who are human and humanized within the context of her captivity. She begins to take on them through living as they do and being accepted into their economy which is a huge deal, she could actually have economic freedom under them without needing a husband or being accepted by the puritans she lives with. There is supposed to be tension in this piece of narrative because it's showing he being integrated into and humanizing her captors, does not make sense for what the purpose of each they do not go together. These two hands of demons and humans. There are two perspectives within this one of the colonialist justification story and then one of the real people and the experiences of seeing humans who are different but they are not demons. But actually human. This story doesn't make sense because the author Mary had the power to write into tension because her pen wasn't entirely being controlled by the men who allowed her to publish it, while some of it was the end message she left in there some very humanizing characteristics.

The tension this shows how disruptive captivity was for Rowlandson and others around and hearing Rowlandson's story. This broke down the barriers between "us" and "them" narrative that was being pushed at the time by Puritans and colonialists. You can see it in some of her narrative how she has one random part that seems to be slipped by the brutal driving home of demonization. I think the tension in this story was

supposed to in the end show her captors as not human, to show that the layers still ended with “us” vs “them” and that people who are not colonialists can “seem” human, but in the end are not. The tension keeps the story alive; it holds the audience captive, wondering, seeking. There is so much action. I think that the action is supposed to fire a response and an active one from the reader. I would argue the purpose of this narrative is to help colonialism and I mean an extreme destructive colonialism to take root within the colonies. Allowing the colonists to extract resources from the land, and push out the indigenous populations as casing them as a threat to their identity and social order.

The book covers creative choices that I made. I decided to make a drawing of a puritan woman who is supposed to be Mary Rowlandson. But she always represents an identity that Minister Mather is pushing by controlling the perspective as a preface towards the narrative. It shapes the perspective more than you'd think. My cover has the puritan woman, in between two realms, One is the wilderness, removed from the society of colonialism and puritan society. The other is the society that has a road leading to it, as her identity is captive outside of what they consider to be appropriate and normal. Her identity being threatened, is a direct hit to the colonialist society. I mean Mary Rowlandson would never have been paid for her skills in puritan society, she would get her income and way of life through her role as a wife and mother. I put claws around her keeping her in the wilderness, symbolism of captivity tension, stuck between two worlds.

Works Cited

Rowlandson, Mary. *Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*. 1682.

Pages from in class hand-out.

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Turn in portfolio link, post to eportfolio

Synopsis

Mary Rowlandson's "*A Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*" from 1682 set in Massachusetts when it was still a colony of the British empire. This narrative is of a puritan woman's experience of being taken captive by the Narragansetts, for about 12 weeks she lived and was held in captivity alongside the Narragasetts. This is a captivity narrative which is supposed to show you the hardships of Mary Rowlandson and her experiences in being captive. How her identity is endangered by being taken and removed from her puritan life as a mother and wife. Her experiences within the different removes when they travel from different areas around Massachusetts. She meets "King Philip" who is a leader of the indigenous people who have her captive since this is the middle of "King Philip's War". King Philip was a nickname by the colonialist for him. This captive narration was also supposed to demonize indigenous people and justify colonialism being used over the indigenous people of the Americans. Basically this narrative is endorsed by a puritan minister since it was written by a woman who herself experienced this captivity it is supposed to show the community of colonialist and puritans why and how the indigenous people are "savages" and they should take the land and kick them off and push them out into genocidal means.

Promotional Blurbs

“Mary is present in the entire story. This piece is one written by a woman and it is named as hers. I had to publish anonymously. Though her writing is still controlled. This captivity narrative shows not a vanishing American trope like I have written, but the indigenous resisting the colonialists. Having an economy, it talks about their food. Though the purpose of this was to sway puritans towards justifying colonialism, and continuing this treatment of indigenous people in the colonies. She is pulled between living in two worlds.”

-Lydia Sigourney

“This narrative depicts indigenous people as dehumanized creatures. To be pushed out of the narrative of the colonizing settler because of this. This narrative is a reminder of the justification and dehumanization that the Puritan colonial settlers imposed on conflict, to create a narrative and negative attitudes on the indigenous. But it also shows the tension of recognizing the group you have been blindly told are ‘Barbarous Creatures’ that can happen.”

- Lin-Manuel Mrianda