

Mary Rowlandson and the Removes of Writing

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The significance of a text unfolds differently as it removes across time. This difference seems particularly noticeable in Mary Rowlandson's *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*,¹ a work that has long been considered a core text in American literary studies. Its status firmly established, Rowlandson's text has evoked a range of critical responses. In a 1973 article, David Minter comments on how Rowlandson's captivity account successfully synthesizes private emotions and Puritan ideology. In the 1990s, however, critical analyses informed by gender studies and cultural theory generated another kind of interpretation of Rowlandson's narrative. For example, Mitchell Robert Breitwieser examines Rowlandson's break with Puritan doctrine and the discrepancy between her religious beliefs and her traumatized condition. Tara Fitzpatrick explores the contradiction between Rowlandson's sense of Puritan election and her cultural adaptation to Indian ways during captivity. Michelle Burnham pays particular attention to the rhetoric of American exceptionalism and how Rowlandson's text offers an intercultural account that reveals the mascu-

1. Originally *The Sovereignty and Goodness of GOD Together With the Faithfulness of His Promise Displayed; Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, Commended by her to all that desire to know the Lords doings to, and dealings with Her. Especially to her Dear Children and Relations* (Cambridge: Samuel Green, 1682), reprinted in Charles H. Lincoln, ed., *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699* (New York: Scribner's, 1913). No first edition of Rowlandson's text exists. The text reprinted in Lincoln is based on a second edition, amended and corrected, from 1682. For the publication history of Rowlandson's captivity narrative see Kathryn Zabelle Derounian's "The Publication, Promotion, and Distribution of Mary Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative in the Seventeenth Century," *Early American Literature* 23 (1988): 239-61.

line and imperialistic nature of the New England colonists. Implementing a critical perspective similar to Burnham, Rebecca Blevins Faery suggests how Rowlandson's tale and the legend of Pocahontas racially and sexually articulate a colonial discourse of white domination. In contrast to the above mentioned studies, the poet Susan Howe performs an intriguing postmodern critical trace of Rowlandson's affliction and restoration.²

What commentators since Minter seem to be responding to is how Rowlandson's captivity narrative embodies both a visible and invisible mode of signifying. Following the paths of inquiry earlier posed by Breitwieser, Burnham, and Fitzpatrick, I wish to further examine the textual gap between what Rowlandson presumably intends to express and what her writing unconsciously composes. This rhetorical alterity paradoxically attempts to maintain cultural distinctions yet simultaneously alludes to the indispensable confluence of difference. It is this sense of alterity and how it is heterogeneously confirmed in the compositional removes of Rowlandson's writing that I wish to address in this essay.

Published in 1682, Rowlandson's narrative was set in the trauma-ridden times of what the English colonists called King Philip's War (1675-1676).³ King Philip was the English name given to Metacom, the *sachem* (leader) of the Wampanoags, who, contrary to other contemporary accounts, appears in a favorable light in Rowlandson's narrative. The armed conflict was between the New England Confederation (Plymouth, Connecticut, and Massachusetts Bay colonies) and primarily the Narragansetts, Wampanoags, and Nipmucs, three of the pre-contact tribal inhabitants of southern New England. After decades of relative peace

2. See Minter, "By Dens and Lions: Notes on Stylization in Early Puritan Captivity Narratives," *American Literature* 45 (1973): 335-47; Breitwieser, *American Puritanism and the Defense of Mourning: Religion, Grief, and Ethnology in Mary White Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1990); Fitzpatrick, "The Figure of Captivity: The Cultural Work of the Puritan Captivity Narrative," *American Literary History* 3 (1991): 1-26; Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchanges in American Literature, 1682-1861* (Hanover: Dartmouth UP, 1997); Blevins Faery, *Cartographies of Desire: Captivity, Race, and Sex in the Shaping of an American Nation* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1999); Howe, *The Birth-mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History* (Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 1993).

3. See Douglas Leach's *Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip's War* (New York: Macmillan, 1958) for a historical overview of King Philip's War. For primary texts related to this period and insightful commentary see Richard Slotkin and James K. Folsom's *So Dreadfull a Judgment: Puritan Responses to King Philip's War, 1667-1677* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1978) and Neal Salisbury, ed., *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God by Mary Rowlandson with Related Documents* (Boston: St. Martin's, 1997).

between the native tribes and English immigrants, disputes over land rights and cultural sovereignty came to a head and resulted in raids and counter attacks on both sides.

The widespread damage of property and loss of life among the English colonists during King Philip's War was difficult to bear and even more difficult to comprehend. Were English colonists not the sons and daughters of the elect who were charged with a divine mission in the wilderness of America? Contemplation over such matters undoubtedly preoccupied the thoughts of many Puritans whose parents immigrated to America with a heavenly enterprise to fulfill. Consequently, a renewal of religious examination and community commitment emerged during King Philip's War. And in the aftermath of this armed conflict, Puritan leaders felt that the mythology of election required re-evocation if their original mission were to be sustained. The publication of Rowlandson's narrative was thus a timely historical record of these traumatic times and an emotionally moving attempt to analyze them.

Although Rowlandson documents a number of important historical facts, she employs the novelistic qualities of conflict, suspense, plot development, and resolution to convey the significance of her story. The suspense-filled action and emotional sincerity of this work, however, represent only two reasons for its continuous reader appeal. Addressing other aspects of Rowlandson's text, Michelle Burnham convincingly argues that the captivity narrative's female protagonist represents a kind of cross-cultural logic. Captive heroines, according to Burnham, "often indulge in transgressive behavior or enact forms of resistant agency" generating "a sentimental discourse that simultaneously masks the movement across boundaries while authorizing it."⁴ Paraphrasing Burnham's argument, one can say that Rowlandson's narrative portrays fluctuating subject positions and depicts on-going social, political, and cultural realignments. Rowlandson's first-person account of capture, captivity, and redemption can thus be understood as the inexactly mapped frontier of cultural displacements and bodily removes, where physical uncertainty frames and metaphorically organizes the cultural distances and vicinities experienced in colonial America.

4. Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchanges in American Literature, 1682-1861*, 3-4. Burnham goes on to present a rather complex yet clearly argued set of ideas which connects the formal elements of captivity narratives with restructured notions of racial, national, and cultural identity.

In the context of these discursive transformations, the Puritan concept of conversion is a central one on both the thematic and stylistic levels of Rowlandson's narrative. On the thematic level, the nature of affliction and restoration is an expressed concern of the author. To be afflicted, according to Puritan doctrine, is a sign of holy election. Put to such a test, the elect must endure the consequences of their sins and steadfastly maintain faith before they are finally blessed by God's all-embracing benevolence. Rowlandson's trial of affliction and redemption are part of her religious conversion.⁵ Scrutinizing the events of her capture and captivity, Rowlandson enters and presumably emerges from a darkened state of sin. Her narrative, in part, describes this holy awakening.

On the level of style, however, another kind of conversion takes place. With the unravelling of the narrative's plot, the religious theme must move across what could be called a previously uncomposed "contact zone." The term "contact zone" is one that Mary Louise Pratt introduced in her discussion and analysis of travel writing that describes European and South American Indian encounters. Derived from the linguistic notion of "contact languages" and the historical notion of "contact frontiers," Pratt informs us that her use of the "'contact zone' is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctions, and whose trajectories now intersect."⁶ Pratt's term is particularly productive when discussing the contact between Rowlandson and her Indian captors and how their relationship is represented in the narrative. For as Pratt suggests, "A 'contact' perspective ... treats the relations among colonizers and colonized, or travelers and 'travelees,' not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power."⁷

From our present-day perspective, it is obvious that Rowlandson's typological reading of events fails to sufficiently signify the "copres-

5. The Puritan concept of religious conversion instrumentally circumscribed the authority of the Church and King of England. Prior to the rise of the Puritan movement in England, church membership was more or less an endowment through birth; babies were received into the church fold through infant baptism. The theological and political dimension of church membership and its codes of admission and expulsion were institutionally controlled by the state. The concept of conversion, however, put spiritual authority elsewhere. An inner experience of religious regeneration was, according to Puritan doctrine, the key to salvation.

6. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturalization* (London: Routledge, 1992) 7.

7. *Ibid.* 7.

ence” and incongruities of her life with the Indians. Although Rowlandson repeatedly inserts references to scripture and continues to insist on their analogical relevance to her predicament, it is the “fieldwork” of Rowlandson’s cultural observations that summons another order of understanding. Her wilderness survival is achieved through an enlarged frame of intelligence and it is reported, at times, in a register of transcultural adaptation⁸ rather than in terms of religious perseverance. The effort to write contact zone experiences is a test of her imagination. The discourse of a devout Puritan is ultimately inadequate to the task. Consequently, a hybrid text that conflates the historical trajectories of Puritan settlers and Indian nations materializes in Rowlandson’s writing.

But in the beginning of her narrative, Rowlandson attempts to maintain absolute cultural distinctions. The Indians stand for chaos and devastation and are oppositionally posed against the order of settlement life. Initially, Rowlandson’s Indian captors are portrayed as brutal assailants, bent on violence and destruction. In contrast to the Puritan devotion of Rowlandson, these impressions place the Indians irremediably outside the hedge of civil society. This distinction is primarily established as Rowlandson details the fury of the Indian attack on her Lancaster home. In lightening-like cinematic cuts and splices, Rowlandson recreates the emotional shock and horror of the Indian raid. The discharge of guns cleaves the stillness of dawn. Rowlandson sees houses ablaze and smoke billowing skyward. She sees neighbors dragged from their homes, family members separated from one another and brutalized. A mother and her infant are clubbed to death. A man runs for his life, is caught, killed, stripped, and disemboweled. “Bullets seemed to fly like hail”⁹ and the terror witnessed at the perimeter of Rowlandson’s comprehension soon engulfs her homestead. Indian warriors move and multiply around the buildings adjacent to her home. They advance with a barrage of bullets, pelting the garrison defenders. One of the men inside is wounded. A second man falls, then another. The siege continues for two hours until the Indians torch the garrison. Recalling this exact moment, Rowlandson

8. “Transculturation” is another term that figures in Pratt’s “contact zone” perspective. It is a neologism from the Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz, and, for Pratt’s purposes, it connotes how marginal groups select and transform dominant modes of representation in order to redefine the governing assumptions of dominant groups.

9. In *Lincoln* 118. All subsequent references to Rowlandson’s narrative appear parenthetically in the text.

dramatically converts the description of tumultuous exterior events to an interior crisis of spirit: "Some in our house were fighting for their lives, others wallowing in their blood, the House on fire over our heads, and the bloody Heathen ready to knock us on the head, if we stirred out. Now might we hear Mothers and Children crying out for themselves, and one another, Lord, What shall we do?" (119). Seized by the urgency of Rowlandson's question, readers are forcefully held in the company of Rowlandson's writing and the ensuing account alters both its narrator and the reader (a captive in different degrees) in unexpected ways.

Rowlandson continues her account by organizing her narrative into twenty removes. Each remove represents a separate geographical site during her almost twelve weeks of captivity. But for Rowlandson each re-location in the wilderness symbolically represents a step towards spiritual redemption. And in her textual quest for clarity, she makes every attempt to differentiate between good and evil, between the civility of her Puritan faith and the assumed savagery of her Indian captors, and finally between the incomprehensible nature of God's wrath and the immeasurable circumference of God's mercy. The categories of good and evil, civility and savagery, rage and charity are, however, placed in flux during Rowlandson's contact with the Indians. Or as Pratt might phrase it, we are introduced to "interlocking understandings and practices."

An early sign of altered distinctions and contact zone discourse already occurs in the first remove. After having laid Lancaster in smouldering ruins, the Indians withdraw and make camp on George Hill, about a mile from the settlement. Seeing an abandoned English house, Rowlandson asks permission to spend the night there and indirectly quotes her captor's reply: "they answered, what will you love English men still?" (121). It is uncertain if the rhetorical question "what will you love English men still" is Rowlandson's translation or an edited paraphrase or if it is an exact transcription of what was originally said. Nevertheless, this textual example of indirect speech is a crucial illustration of the transcultural linguistic positions held by Rowlandson and her captors. The Indian reply is rendered in English diction and its syntactic construction elevates the response to a near lyrical rebuke, a reprimand that combines sarcasm and wit. The Indian's retort to Rowlandson's request not only displays linguistic mastery; it also represents intellectual quickness and felicity, traits that stand in stark contrast to her condemnation of the "Bar-

barous Creatures" who wrecked Lancaster (121). Of greater importance, however, is the revisionary dimension of the Indian's reply, which seems to be a rhetorical inversion of what might have been a missionary's question: "What will you love the life of a savage still?" Rowlandson's account of "Indian speech" is a striking illustration of contact zone discourse and a synecdoche of cultural mediation. The point I wish to make here has to do with the linguistic overlaps and interventions that take place between presumably utterly distinct and oppositional cultural subjects.

The diction and sarcasm of the Indian response is perhaps not all that surprising from a historical perspective. Many Indians were exposed to Christianity through the efforts of Puritan missionaries. John Eliot, minister of Roxbury, Massachusetts, is no doubt the most famous of the Puritan proselytes of the period. In 1646, the Massachusetts General Court authorized Eliot to purchase land that would serve as permanent centers for Indians under Christian instruction. These centers, which were referred to as "praying towns," radically restructured the lives of their Indian inhabitants. A European order and a Puritan theocracy more severe than practiced in the English settlements were imposed as a means of civilizing the Indians in praying towns. Fixed dwellings and adjacent farm fields replaced the Indians' migratory practices, which followed the rhythms of the season. The "praying Indians" were required by law to cut their hair and encouraged to wear English clothing. Customary Indian social behavior was deemed to be a sign of laziness and devilry. In defiance of this kind of coercion and cultural decimation, many Indians inevitably left the praying towns and returned to their indigenous way of life. Against this background, it is not far-fetched to think that Rowlandson's interlocutors were perhaps at one time praying Indians and familiar with the caustic rhetoric of a proselytizing missionary. If this is the case, their rebuke, "what will you love English men still," is an alert and shrewd transcultural intervention, exemplifying the agency of contact zone discourse.

The status of a praying Indian in Rowlandson's narrative is a complex one. The oxymoron-like figuration of the term accentuates the cultural hybridity of a "heathen" situated in the fold of Christian discourse. To call an Indian who accepts Christianity a "praying Indian" conceptually hyphenates the subject and casts doubt on the depth of an individual's

religious commitments.¹⁰ At best, the modifying adjective “praying” denotes a visible form of reverence, a step towards civil manners, which, from a Puritan perspective, is only an initial and incomplete step towards conversion and redemption. There are several instances in her narrative where Rowlandson denounces praying Indians as frauds and hypocrites. But her appraisal of the Indians whom she meets and lives with alters noticeably during her captivity.

An illustration of this change is indirectly reported in the third remove. Rowlandson informs her reader that a large group of warriors returned to the Indian village Wenimesset where she is presently held. According to Rowlandson, the Indians are boisterous with celebration after a successful raid against the English settlement of Medfield, where fifty houses were destroyed and twenty-three settlers killed:

Oh, the hideous insulting and triumphing that there was over some Englishmens scalps that they had taken (as their manner is) and brought with them. I cannot but take notice of the wonderfull mercy of God to me in those afflictions, in sending me a Bible. One of the Indians that came from Medfield fight, had brought some plunder, came to me, and asked me, if I would have a Bible, he had got one in his Basket. I asked him, whether he thought the Indians would let me read? he answered, yes: So I took the Bible. (127)

There are many remarkable peculiarities about this passage. First, it is amazing how quickly Rowlandson’s testimony passes from registering her contempt against the Indian battle celebration to a mood of personal delight over the gain of a Bible. Second, she is able to secure the Bible through a short exchange with a returning warrior. This not only suggests that Rowlandson can adequately communicate with certain Indians, it also suggests that she is willing to trust their judgment and assurances. In this case, the Indian who gives Rowlandson the Bible is transfigured in the grammatical construction of Rowlandson’s important question “whether he thought the Indians would let me read?” She grammatically separates and distances this warrior from the other Indians by using the pronoun “he.” To me, this represents a case of particularizing an Indian

10. In contrast to this compromised vision of a praying Indian, it is important to note that many Indians were pragmatic about spiritual matters. It was not uncommon for them, like other colonized people, to simultaneously hold different religious beliefs in their effort to navigate through the hegemony of a dominant culture. Realizing that their lives as well as their inherited traditions were at stake, Indians were forced to adapt to the religious politics of the English colonialists.

interlocutor through a grammatical relocation. The pronominal address may seem unworthy of attention, but when syntactically constructed in opposition to "the Indians," Rowlandson's grammatical transformation takes on a subtle significance and further complicates the image of her Indian captors.

But the most extraordinary aspect of this passage is the fact that Rowlandson accepts the Bible. Although she specifically states that it was part of the plunder from Medfield, this does not for a moment prevent Rowlandson from immediately embracing this "gift." A Boston Council decision from August 30, 1675, six months prior to her abduction, stipulated: "Also it shall not be lawful for any Indians that are in Amity with us, to entertain any strange Indians, *or receive any of our Enemies Plunder*, but shall from Time to Time make Discovery thereof to some English, that shall be Appointed for that End to sojourn among them, on Penalty of being reputed our Enemies, and of being liable to be proceeded against as such."¹¹ Clearly, what Rowlandson does is neither in accordance with the letter nor spirit of the Council's mandate. The Council order was designed to maintain strict distinctions between friendly, Christian Indians and Indians who posed a threat to English security. Indian attacks against English settlements seriously jeopardized the entire colonial enterprise, and the Council, through such directives, attempted to limit complicity and conspiracy between Christian Indians and their "heathen" counterparts.

The Bible taken in the Medfield attack is clearly stolen goods. However, Rowlandson elides this fact by superseding it with what she believes to be a divine truth. She interprets the appearance of the Bible as an act of God. From a formal perspective, this event is extremely important because now Rowlandson can refer to scripture as an immediate part of the narrative action. This means that the primary text of typology, in the form of the Bible taken from Medford, is placed directly into the plot. Subsequently, the narrator can now readily interpret every single instance of misfortune or unexpected mercy within the time of the narrated events. Merging the action of Rowlandson's story with the hermeneutic apparatus of its meaning gives the narrative a powerful sense of unity.

But as I have been arguing, Rowlandson's effort to maintain narrative

11. In Lincoln 33, my emphasis.

and ideological coherence is undermined by the transcultural positions expressed in her writing. Another specific example of this is Rowlandson's hope and suggestion that she be taken to Albany, New York and exchanged for gunpowder. At the end of the eighth remove, she notes that a raiding party has just come back from an attack against the settlement of Northampton. The Indians return with stolen horses and sheep. Rowlandson tries to take hold of an opportunity: "I desired them, that they would carry me to Albany, upon one of those Horses, and sell me for Powder: for so they had sometimes discoursed" (136). This is a dubious proposition; she must know that the powder could be used in future attacks against the English colonists. Moreover, the proposal to obtain powder from Albany feeds into the grievous allegations made against Albany merchants, who were accused of selling munitions to enemy Indians. New York was never officially engaged in King Philip's War and its Governor, Edmund Andros, was unpopular among the Puritan land charter holders of the New England Confederation. Conversely, Andros was irritated over the insinuation that his government was passively supporting such commerce. Rowlandson's desperation to free herself from captivity, similar to her willingness to accept plunder, sidesteps the moral and political implications of her request. Her transcultural position of captivity alters her attitude and behavior. Even if Rowlandson appears to be steadfast in her belief that God will protect her, she becomes extremely pragmatic when it comes to her day-to-day efforts to survive.

The most significant signs of Rowlandson's altered cultural condition appear in the nineteenth remove. Rowlandson and a company of Indians make their way to Wachusett Hills, where they are to negotiate her eventual release. They must traverse a swamp on the march to their destination. Having already traveled three days without much rest, Rowlandson is near exhaustion. Wading through mud and knee-deep water takes an additional toll on her depleted reserves. During this arduous trek, Rowlandson remembers meeting Metacom (King Philip), who took her by the hand and said: "Two weeks more and you shal be Mistress again," the implication being that she would soon be reunited with her husband. Rowlandson replies: "I asked him, if he spake true? he answered, Yes, and quickly you shal come to your master again; who had been gone from us three weeks" (150). There is a strange merging of mercies here. The redemption that she prays for is near at hand but it is intersected with

a more immediate deliverance. Rowlandson's writing conflates her future reunion with her husband with her more direct return to her Indian master Quinnapin. When Rowlandson offers a qualifying clause regarding how long her Indian master had been "gone from us," she does so by using a plural pronoun construction. The choice of a plural pronoun presumes a collective identity, encircling all of those, including Rowlandson, who are under the protection of her Indian master, Quinnapin. The positive sentiment expressed in this passage matches an earlier statement. Referring to Quinnapin's absence and in anticipation of his return, Rowlandson declares: "My master being gone, who seemed to me the best friend that I had of an Indian, both in cold and hunger, and quickly so it proved" (139). Rowlandson's sense of encouragement is thus increased twofold by Metacom's added remark about her reunion with Quinnapin at Mount Wachusett.

When they arrive at Mount Wachusett, Rowlandson notes the presence of Quinnapin and exclaims: "glad I was to see him" (150). She continues: "He asked me When I washt me? I told him not this month, then he fetched me some water himself, and bid me wash ..." (150). It is at this point that Rowlandson is perhaps most "Indianized." The reunion is cast in near ceremonial terms. Quinnapin poses an intimate question, a question perhaps not singularly limited to Rowlandson's soiled appearance. Assuming that Quinnapin considered Rowlandson formally a member of his clan, his question when she last washed and his willingness to retrieve water for her would be an observance of Indian customs. Rowlandson goes on to describe how she was given a mirror and something to eat after her bath and discloses: "I was wonderfully revived with this favour shewed me" and cites Scripture as a way of explaining Indian kindness in terms of divine intervention.

Immediately following this scene, Rowlandson gives an account of Quinnapin's three squaws. This digression has little to do with the plot's forward motion but perhaps is metonymically inserted due to her being fed by one of the squaws and by her sense of "belonging" to Quinnapin's circle of women. In addition, Rowlandson offhandedly inserts two statements that underscore the level of her socio-economic integration within tribal life. She remarks: "Then came an Indian, and asked me to knit him three pair of Stockins, for which I had a hat, and a silk Handkerchief. Then another asked me to make her a shift, for which she gave me an

Apron" (151). Innocent as these statements might be, one wonders whether the hat, the silk handkerchief, and the apron are perhaps items of plunder taken from the English, the receiving of which was strictly forbidden, as mentioned earlier, by a Massachusetts decree.

The nineteenth remove also records the arrival of the Christian Indians Tom Dublet (Nepanet) and Peter Conway (Tatatiquinea) who carried a letter from the Massachusetts Council and signed by John Leverett, the colony's Governor. Rowlandson recalls: "When the Letter was come, the Saggamores met to consult about the Captives, and called me to them to enquire how much my husband would give to redeem me" (151). She is vexed by the fact that if she sets too high a price her husband would be unable to pay it, and if she sets too low a figure, the Indians would reject it. Rowlandson is nonetheless able to quickly calculate what she believes to be a mutually acceptable sum. After a moment of anxiety filled deliberation she says twenty pounds.¹²

As these important events in the negotiation of her release occur, the narrative suddenly veers away from its focus on the subject of Rowlandson's ransom. Instead of the lineal continuation of action, plot motion is arrested by references unessential to these negotiations. Rowlandson begins to speak of a praying Indian who tells her that he has a brother who, "because his conscience was so tender and scrupulous" (152), did not eat horse meat but later read a biblical passage suggesting that it was acceptable to eat the flesh of a donkey. Rowlandson's citing of this anecdote, without further commentary, seems like an indirect defense of her eating horse meat to survive during her captivity, which otherwise might have been considered an abomination to a Christian reader.

She subsequently speaks of another praying Indian who betrayed his father to "purchase his own life." This breach of family trust is of course a sin against the fifth commandment to honor thy father and mother. Rowlandson goes on to list, in what seems to be uncontrollable speed, the misconduct of other praying Indians and concludes with a rather strained transition that allows her to speak of an Indian powwow. The formal negotiations for her release are by now effectively displaced and put further in the distance by a unique and richly detailed description of this

12. This sum can be compared with the thirty pounds/year widow's pension that was awarded but never paid by Connecticut to Rowlandson.

sacred Indian ritual. Rowlandson's subsequent account, at the surface level, portrays the powwow as a satanic ceremony. Her decision to include this event in the narrative, however, signifies an indirect complicity with what she observes. Rather than dismissing it through omission, the powwow becomes an ambiguous contact zone reference.

The description of the powwow is relatively long and is an indication of its impact on her senses. In a tone of fascination and concentration she describes the central position of the shaman at the hub of a human circle. According to Rowlandson, the shaman "made a speech, and all manifested assent to it: and so they did many times together." She continues by describing how a warrior with a gun appeared next to the shaman and then was prompted to exit the ring but was later beckoned again and again to return to the circle's center. There is a repetition of the chanting which initiates the warrior's exclusion and his re-entry to the inner space of the ring. These calls and responses are repeated with increasing vigor until the warrior's final re-entry into the circle concludes in "a rejoicing manner: and so they ended their business, and forthwith went to Sudbury-fight" (153).

Rowlandson later registers surprise when the Indians are not more enthusiastic upon their return from a successful raid against the settlement of Sudbury and says that they came back "like Dogs ... which have lost their ears," a simile she apparently picked up from the Indians. The Indians tell Rowlandson that their losses were relatively slight, perhaps numbering five or six braves. Nevertheless, Rowlandson feels compelled to qualify the Indian estimates with her own personal comment: "I missed none, except in one Wigwam" (153). The added remark implies that Rowlandson is rather acquainted with the faces and identities of her Indian captors and that her ability to distinguish between one Indian and another is an evolved and reliable one at this stage of her captivity.

This long, free associative-like succession of references to praying Indians, the powwow, and commentary that relates to the return of the Sudbury war party, to me, represents cultural tensions in the mind of Rowlandson. Soon to be redeemed and reunited with her family, it is at this juncture in the narrative that Rowlandson begins to take serious stock of the shifts and changes in her understanding. Up to this point in the narrative, she has suffered much pain, exerted much effort, and received unexpected portions of help from her Indian captors. Earlier, hope of

rescue was distant. But with the ransom negotiations at Mount Wachusett, Rowlandson's spirit is regenerated and for the first time she feels that release is well in her reach. This realization ironically causes anxiety because she knows that the price of her survival, thus far, was paid neither in goods nor money but through cultural adaptation. During her captivity, Rowlandson learned and practiced the ways of the Indians; she shared their food and shelter, she became a part of their internal system of services and exchanges, and as a witness to a sacred ceremony, she was, at least visually, introduced to their spiritual rituals. Recalling the transgressions of praying Indians and describing the "deviltry" of the powwow is, in this advanced remove, a way to re-establish cultural boundaries and differences. However, Rowlandson crossed those boundaries and was located in those differences. After returning to her husband and to her English community, Rowlandson suffers from insomnia. Clearly, the affliction of sleepless nights is lighter to bear than the uncertainty of captivity. But Rowlandson's nocturnal removes may be a symptom of another kind of captivity. Fundamentally altered, she is now held hostage in her own otherness.

Rather than a distinct delineation between foe and friend or affliction and deliverance, Rowlandson's narrative depicts an existential borderland. Her sleepless nights of reflection, according to Rowlandson herself, are effects of awe as she, now returned to the safety of her Puritan community, reconsiders God's "awful dispensation" and "his wonderfull power and might" (166). This confession is an attempt to circumscribe the terror and uncertain meaning of her ordeal, yet her horror and uncertainty have no outer edge. It matters little that she is among family and friends, or that she eats her fill in the comforts of her home, or that she has become a celebrated citizen, a revered example of election, a visible saint. In spite of her redeemed status, a marauding doubt lurks within her prose.

Even if Rowlandson's autobiographical account is largely cast in the idiom of a devout seventeenth-century Puritan, it is a text that speaks in multiple tongues. I am alluding to the text's compounding figuration of Rowlandson's life and how Rowlandson's recollection of remarkable occurrences overruns the explanatory dimensions of Puritan doctrine. Indian kindness, inexplicable to Rowlandson except as an expression of God's mysterious will, is fundamental to her survival. For strategic rea-

sons, Rowlandson enters a network of tribal relationships. Unexpectedly, in moments of acute despair, she receives physical assistance, food, and adequate shelter from the Indians who, in a larger frame of misfortune, are being driven from their homelands by the English colonial forces. Physically removed from her Puritan family, Rowlandson was transcultured and became an actual member of her captor's clan.

Such an admission was unthinkable. The purity and uncompromised character of a female captive was a delicate issue and was discussed in the Preface that accompanied Mary Rowlandson's text. The anonymous author of the Preface, *Ter Amicam*,¹³ affirms the authenticity, purpose, and humble sanctity of Rowlandson's written disclosures and morally contextualizes the importance of Rowlandson's narrative:

This Narrative was penned by the Gentlewoman her self, to be to her a memorandum of Gods dealing with her, that she might never forget, but all the dayes of her life. A pious scope which deserves both commendation and imitation. Some friends having obtained a sight of it, could not but be so much affected with the many passages of working providence discovered therein, as to judge it worthy of publick view, and altogether unmeet that such works of God should be hid from present and future Generations ... (115).

The Preface performs the expected endorsement, but it is flawed because it does not achieve the candor nor does it subject itself to the public exposure for which it praises Rowlandson's narrative. Although it has been speculated that Increase Mather, the influential Puritan minister, wrote the Preface, "Ter Amicam" remains unidentified in the folds of its Latin signature.¹⁴ The author of the Preface thus removes to the hidden level of anonymity, separating himself from what might be considered the tran-

13. *Ter Amicam* is an ungrammatical Latin formulation and is most likely a compositor's error. Thus the English translation, "Thy Threefold friend," with its internal folds and multiple removes, is based on a grammatical inaccuracy. In a study of the publication history of Rowlandson's narrative, Kathryn Zabelle Derounian notes: "Introducing Rowlandson's work in all four 1682 editions was an anonymous preface to the reader signed 'Per Amicam' ('For a Friend') in the American editions and 'Per Amicum' ('By a Friend') in the London issue" (240). One might add that, according to Latin grammar, *Per Amicam*, should be read "For a female Friend." I am indebted to Michael Srigley for making this point.

14. A number of scholars have attributed the authorship of the Preface to Increase Mather. If Mather did write the Preface, why did he choose to remain anonymous? No one to my knowledge has raised this question. Given the fact that Increase Mather published writing which interpreted King Philip's War in terms of divine punishment it seems odd that he would be unwilling to pen his name to an introduction of a narrative that did the same.

sculpturated spirit and body of Rowlandson's text. Ostensibly, the Preface is written in friendship, in support of Rowlandson's devotion and assumed deliverance, yet its furred identity avoids complicity with what could be considered personal indiscretions and religious oversights on Rowlandson's part.

Because Rowlandson's narrative branches off into several rhetorical directions and evidently lacks the kind of closure that it presumes to have achieved, the author of the Preface may have thought it wiser to remain unknown. Moreover, Rowlandson's admittance of insomnia is a conspicuous sign of displaced doubt. Far from singularly illustrating a sense of Puritan election and a particular instance of spiritual conversion, Rowlandson's writing duplicates the cultural contentions of the contact zone. There is a strange mix of conflict, resistance, and adaptation in the utterances of Rowlandson's narration. The struggle to preserve a discrete Puritan identity is perpetually undermined as contact experience reconstitutes the subjects of the narrative. The physical movement and relocation of Rowlandson and her Indian captors, who in turn are captives of English colonial expansion, literally and figuratively transform the conditions of the narrative's meaning.

What Rowlandson's writing reveals, despite continuous reference to divine intervention, is that she learned to live and survive in the company of people deemed wholly other from her. This is a fact that is suppressed by the acts of typology inserted in the text. But typology cannot silence the various forms of Rowlandson's transculturated discourse. The framing narrative of Puritan ideology is unable to fully subordinate the framed stories of Indian assistance and generosity. Consequently, one might say that Rowlandson's exposition of Indian and Puritan consciousness speaks in a polysemic voice, provoking readers to advance and retreat across a number of conceptual boundaries. Which is why, in my estimation, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* is a text of unredeemed and unsettled sensibilities. Nonetheless, its transculturated meaning miraculously survives in the removes of writing and allows Susan Howe to claim: "Mary Rowlandson saw what she did not see[,] said what she did not say."¹⁵

15. Howe, *The Birth-mark* 128.