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THE INDIANS AND THEIR CAPTIVES. Edited by James Levernier and Hennig Cohen. Contributions in American Studies, no. 31. Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 1977. 291 pp. \$17.50

Throughout the four centuries of Indian-white military conflict, hundreds of published accounts—often true, often fictionalized, usually both—related the experiences of whites (and, occasionally, blacks) captured by Indians. Though these captivity narratives have been approached by students of history, ethnology, and literature, the analytic effort of the past half century has been dominated by the last of these. As Roy Harvey Pearce summarized academic priorities in 1947, "matters of pure historical fact . . . and ethnological data . . . are beside the point; what is important is what the narrative was for the readers for whom it was written." ("The Significances of the Captivity Narrative," *American Literature*, 19 (1947): 1.)

Levernier's and Cohen's new reader is rooted squarely in this tradition of literary scholarship. Through skillful selection and editing of excerpts, they have provided a fine survey of the development and evolution of the captivity theme from the pre-colonial explorers to the end of the nineteenth century, and from the narratives themselves to the theme's transmutation in the hands of novelists, poets, melodramatists, tall-tale tellers, and even visual artists. To illustrate these changes, they have grouped the narratives in five parts. "The Discovery of the Indian" begins with the earliest sixteenth-century encounters when Europeans were uncertain about their nature, and extends to the early colonial period when stereotypes reflecting the preconceptions and goals of various European groups began to appear. The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were characterized by narratives in which captivity was experienced by Jesuits and Puritans as "Trials of the Spirit" imposed by God for the edification of both captives and subsequent readers. And "The Land Imperative" is posited as the principal motive behind the bulk of the first-hand narratives, beginning with those of the mid-eighteenth century and, following the frontier, to the end of the nineteenth. The editors then present nineteenth-century narratives written "Behind the Frontier" in which easterners reworked the captivity theme for moral and didactic purposes, and "Beyond the Frontier" in which conscious artists, both popular and high, used captivity as a vehicle for their creations.

This kind of categorization can never help tending toward the arbitrary and the artificial, as the editors themselves recognize. Yet the three-way distinction among works produced in the nineteenth century, though simple, is a sound and useful one. It is the presentation of the colonial narratives that is troublesome. "The Discovery of the Indian" includes excerpts from only two accounts—that of Juan Ortiz, captured in Florida in 1529 and rescued by de Soto a decade later, and John Smith's recounting of his celebrated rescue by Pochahontas. Moreover,

the Ortiz selection is marred by the editors' unexplained decision to present the nineteenth-century Boston reworking by Samuel Gardner Drake, complete with the latter's celebration of his culture's superior (to both Spanish and Indians) understanding of the meaning of death! Fortunately, this poor start does not set a precedent for the remaining selections. But the real problem with the period covered by "The Discovery of the Indian" is that its very few captivity narratives were generally by-products of other literary undertakings.

The genre does acquire coherence with the narratives grouped under "Trials of the Spirit." The question raised here is not the group's appropriateness but the point at which it is supplanted by something different. Levernier and Cohen are correct to emphasize the secularization of the New England narratives produced during the "French-Indian" wars between 1689 and 1763. But in their view the process was completed about a third of the way through the eighteenth century. As a result, we find John Norton's *The Redeemed Captive* (1748) grouped with the wide assortment of nineteenth-century frontier tracts as part of "The Land Imperative." Yet the editors' own excerpt centers on Norton's description of a French soldier's joining some Indians in dismembering an English soldier's corpse. This kind of lurid reportage embellishes, but remains rooted in, the theme of Catholic-"savage" connivance against Divine Providence and New England developed by Cotton Mather during the 1690s.

Though there is a unity to the first-hand narratives produced during the nineteenth century, it is not best expressed in the title, "The Land Imperative." To be sure, the vast majority of these accounts were designed, or at least used, to justify military aggression and the seizure of Indian lands. But such motives would not seem to have been paramount in the publication of the accounts of John Tanner, Mary Jemison, and other "white Indians." What more obviously integrates this group is the claim, true or false, to relate a captivity experience directly. Represented at its extremes by Tanner's moving account of Ojibwa life and by "Mary Smith's" patently false atrocity stories, these narratives permitted readers in the privacy of their sitting rooms to identify with captives, captors, and rescuers and to indulge in fantasies of omnipotence and powerlessness, autonomy and dependence, sadism and masochism—indeed a whole range of emotions and experiences quite at odds with their everyday, market-oriented lives. It is not that Levernier and Cohen are inaccurate in suggesting the relationship of economics to these narratives but that they depict this relationship too narrowly.

The editors make no extended attempt to define an underlying theme for their collection, merely restating the familiar notion that captivity was a metaphor for the cultural captivity experienced by whites in the face of their ambivalence between "civilization" and "the wilderness." Yet there is more to be gained from this material. Certainly it illustrates the ways in which the printing press reinforced the cultural distance

between Indians and whites by perpetuating and elaborating the stereotypes and symbols of "savagery" upon which fantasies were based. By representing Indians in terms of moral and psychological abstractions, the narratives helped to define an area of cultural and political consensus for an otherwise fragmented white population. For historians of white American culture, then, this collection provides a valuable introduction to an important body of source materials.

Its emphasis on Indians as symbolic and mythical figures renders the volume less useful for students of Indian history. The value of this kind of literary approach would be enhanced were scholars willing to take the captivity experiences of Indians as seriously as they have those of whites. The well known autobiographies of Black Hawk and Geronimo relate tales of captivity, and Black Elk tells of being in a state of figurative if not literal captivity. Moreover, the "cultural captivity" of Indians by whites has been a concern of both non-Indian and Indian writers in this century from LaFarge to Silko. Aside from Elemire Zolla, a European, literary scholars have overlooked Indian authors and Indian captives in their studies of "the Indian in American literature." (Zolla, *The Writer and the Shaman: A Morphology of the American Indian*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York, 1973). Two collections of literary sources demonstrating sensitivity to native perspectives are Frederick W. Turner III, ed., *The Portable North American Indian Reader* (New York, 1974), and Charles M. Segal and David C. Stineback, eds., *Puritans, Indians, and Manifest Destiny* (New York, 1977).)

Beyond the problem of coverage, this and most literary studies are limited by the kind of underlying assumptions spelled out by Pearce in the passage quoted above. (For Pearce's recent rethinking on this subject, see his "From the History of Ideas to Ethnohistory," *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 2 (1974): 86-92.) Many of the narratives are important sources of historical fact and ethnological data, as nineteenth-century scholars such as Drake and Lewis Henry Morgan recognized. Most valuable are the few first-hand accounts of "white Indians" who had themselves joined the societies they described. But even most of the anti-Indian narratives are rooted in actual experiences. They vary in reliability, not only from one account to another, but from one edition to another and even within single editions. The accumulated ignorance and bias of most authors, editors, and publishers has understandably led to a reluctance on the part of ethnohistorians to make extensive and systematic use of the narratives. This is unfortunate because, besides their general value as descriptions of Indian life and history, many of them provide our best views of native groups during wars, including rituals, tactics, movements, leadership, the treatment of prisoners, the conditions of non-combatant life, and diplomacy. They also inform us on the process of adoption of captives, as James Axtell has demonstrated so well for the eighteenth-century east. ("The White Indians of Colonial America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 32 (1975): 55-88.)

There are signs that the low point in this history of scholarly neglect has been reached. With the cooperation of the Newberry Library, Garland Press is presently reprinting 311 narratives in 111 volumes, including multiple editions of some. It is to be hoped that this greater availability will not only lead to more systematic use of the narratives by scholars but to carefully prepared editions of the most valuable ones by qualified ethnohistorians. Following Axtell's lead, we should soon be able to employ them for more balanced assessments than literary approaches allow of the Indian-white cultural frontier.

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THE FAR NORTH: 2000 YEARS OF AMERICAN ESKIMO AND INDIAN ART. By Henry B. Collins, Frederica de Laguna, Edmund Carpenter, and Peter Stone. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977. 289 pp. pap. \$14.95

Modern attitudes toward "primitive" or tribal art have been characterized by a shift in perspective from the primitive product as artifact and curio to primitive art as the object of aesthetic contemplation, academic inquiry, and commercial speculation. Today, primitive art of "quality" is as often to be seen in art museums, commercial galleries, and private art collections as in natural history collections. Quite often, the first or best publication of a primitive art object occurs in the exhibition catalog of a museum or the sale catalog of a gallery. The publication format of descriptive catalog and explanatory essay has become an important form of documentation for the study of primitive art. The review of a major exhibition catalog is an opportunity to measure the approach and accomplishments of the exhibition against the objective demands of scholarly progress.

*The Far North* is the record of an "official" U.S. exhibition of the art production of the native peoples of the state of Alaska: the Eskimos, Aleuts, Athabaskans, and Tlingit. The exhibition opened at the National Gallery of Art in Washington in the spring of 1973, and then travelled to Fort Worth, Portland, Seattle, and Anchorage. The catalog entries were written by Edmund Carpenter, Henry B. Collins, John Cook, Frederica de Laguna, and C. Douglas Lewis. Essays of varying length were contributed by Carpenter, Collins, de Laguna, and Peter Stone.

With one exception (a drawing in a private collection), all of the nearly 400 objects illustrated in the catalog are from public collections in the