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**Issue 14: Captivity Narratives Then and Now: Gender, Race, and the Captive in Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century American Literature and Culture**

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**An Interview with Nancy Armstrong, Coauthor of *The Imaginary Puritan: Literature, Intellectual Labor, and the Origins of Personal Life***

**by Megan Behrent**

Nancy Armstrong is Gilbert, Louis, and Edward Lehrman Professor of Trinity College, Duke University; editor of *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*; author of *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987), *Fiction in the Age of Photography* (1999), *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism, 1719-1900* (2005); and with Leonard Tennenhouse, coauthor of *The Imaginary Puritan* (1992) and *Novels in the Time of Democratic Writing* (2017).

Contact: n.b.armstrong@duke.edu

Megan Behrent is Assistant Professor of English at New York City College of Technology, CUNY. Her research focuses on literature and social movements and the intersection among race, gender, sexuality, and class in twentieth and twenty-first century American literature. She recently published "Suburban Captivity Narratives: Feminism, Domesticity, and the Liberation of the American Housewife" in *JNT: Journal of Narrative Theory*. She is a contributor to *Inside Our Schools* and *Education and Capitalism*, and has published articles in *Assuming Gender*, *College Literature*, *Critical Survey of American Literature*, *Harvard Educational Review*, *International Socialist Review*, *New Politics* and *Workplace: a Journal of Academic Labor*.

Contact: mbehrent@citytech.cuny.edu

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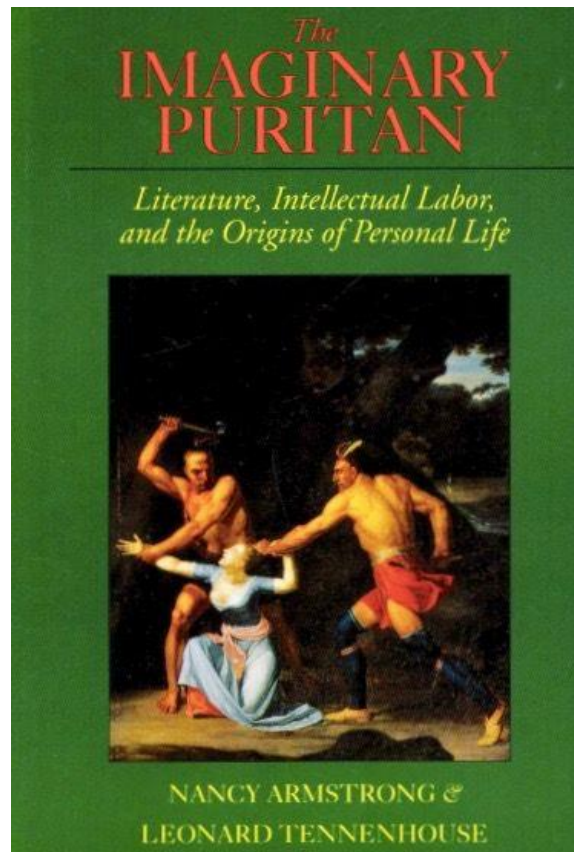
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**Megan Behrent:** In *The Imaginary Puritan: Literature, Intellectual Labor, and the Origins of Personal Life* and later in “Captivity and Cultural Capital in the English Novel” you explored the influence of early American captivity narratives on the development of the English novel, arguing that the captivity narrative played an important role in the development of “what Benedict Anderson calls ‘an imagined community,’ the basis at once for a new concept of nationality and for a new ruling class.” Can you say more about how you came to this understanding of the role of captivity narratives within the cultural capital of the period?

**Nancy Armstrong:** The short answer: I grew up on Claude Lévi-Strauss, Louis Althusser, and the theory of narrative that they fostered, and so I assume that the story of a community’s origins offers a way for that community to make sense of itself to itself. For the British in early America, this meant making sense of the fact that they were the violent invaders rather than the people born from American soil (the autochthone). The captivity narrative transformed the British role into that of the righteous protector of womanhood (defensive violence) and bearer of domestic culture (aka civilization). This same redefinition of violence against a people as violence in defense of womanhood has been updated and reproduced through the centuries to legitimate the violence of a white (though certainly no longer British) ruling class over and over

against successive immigrant waves, as well as those marked as racially and culturally other. This narrative inflected the American notion of freedom with a sense of religious entitlement from the beginning, making the property acquired through primitive accumulation (this includes slavery, as well as land-grabbing and more recent forms of American imperialism) equivalent in prestige to inherited property.

I will insist, though, that I did not stumble upon a symptomatic reading of the captivity narrative but went to early American culture with a pretty clear idea of what I wanted to find. I had recently finished my account of the rise of the English novel as instrumental in the rise of a new feminine ideal and the hegemonic formation of an English household under her management, and so came to early American literature looking for “the before” of a before-and-after story for which I already knew “the after.” I had a hunch that I’d find the past of British domestic fiction in the settler colonies of North America where English men and women were called on to make both a new kind of domestic unit and a community composed of such units. Thus, it wasn’t long before I spotted what I was looking for in the recurrent form of the American captivity narrative—the very principle at work in such British novels as Richardson’s *Pamela* and *Clarissa* and Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho*.

My first chance to lay out the argument connecting these two strands of Anglo American cultural history came as an invitation to deliver a plenary talk at an annual meeting of the Northeast Eighteenth-Century Society of America in the late 1980s. What seemed so obvious to me—the idea that a woman in danger of losing the qualities that entitled her to form an English household could be a rhetorical instrument of modern nation making—struck my audience as preposterous. The process of figuring out why I was so baffled by this response was almost as important as my time in the archive in determining how I was going to think about the early novel. To find my proposal preposterous, I reasoned, my audience had assumed that England and what eventually became the United States had each sprung from a different cultural source. Only if they thought of Great Britain and British North America, not as a single nation, but as separate from the start could my audience then assume that the features that gave each culture a distinct identity would be located at its core, not its periphery.

To challenge this tenacious pair of assumptions, I wrote a number of articles that showed how the figure of an articulate young Englishwoman—captive to the protocols of an old ruling class (i.e. the exchange of women) and besieged by libertines—was simply a British rewriting of the puritan woman held captive in British North America. In thus further secularizing the puritan version of the holy mother, the heroine of the captivity narrative provided an English nation undergoing modernization with the same sort of “culture bearer” that Annette Weiner calls the “inalienable possession” of potlatch cultures—the one thing a tribe cannot give away without losing its identity as such. Forged in the settler colonies of North America, this figure made an important contribution to the colonial apparatus of the British Empire over the course of two centuries and throughout the colonies. The same cultural logic that shaped this figure also shaped such memorable characters as Clarissa Harlowe (of course), Fanny Price, Jane Eyre, Lucy Westenra (*Dracula*), Adela (*Passage to India*), and “the beloved” in *Heart of Darkness*.

**MB:** That explains how you arrived at this insight, but could you now tell me how this figure of the captive woman or “culture bearer,” as you describe her, can both reinforce the colonial project of the British Empire and consolidate a modern ruling class at home?

**NA:** Whenever they put a young Englishwoman in danger of contamination by Native Americans (and an occasional Papist), American captivity narratives put the very essence of Englishness at risk, reversing the actual relation of Native victim to British victimizer and justifying the slaughter of indigenous peoples wherever the English went. (The Australian legend of Hanging Rock is another example.) To appropriate the captivity narrative for the emergent middle classes, the sentimental British novel simply played it out on a different cultural stage. Set in an English manor house, the assault on the daughters of the respectable classes carried out by a libertine displaying the degenerate inclinations of the traditional aristocracy tested the very features that women of the aspiring classes brought to the marriage market.

As the heroine of a domestic novel, a woman whose only armor was her literary taste and morality was able to rally the reading public to the defense of what would become, by the time of the Brontës, a single-family household. When managed by such a woman, this household established the Victorian norm and, by way of that domestic unit, a model of what Hannah Arendt calls “national housekeeping” (*The Human Condition*). To threaten the women was to threaten the family and thus to threaten the nation itself. I hear the current attempt, throughout the West, to equate immigrants with “rapists” or “terrorists” sounding much the same note of white nationalism as D.W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation*. This film updates the Native American with the emancipated slave as the figure of the rapist, the current wave of xenophobia demonizes the Muslim and, in the US, the Latin American. By contrast, the Anglo ethnicity of the defenseless woman remains pretty much the same.

You’re right of course to ask how the same captivity narrative could not only invoke a sense of nationalism in a colonial context but also consolidate a new ruling class back in England: Aren’t the two forms of affiliation somehow opposed? How this narrative could work in the same way and yet produce two very different results becomes apparent when we recall how novelists like Nathaniel Hawthorne and Susanna Rowson reversed the relation of Englishwoman to Native to show under what conditions the colonial figure of British womanhood could go home again to England. Having “gone native,” Hester Prynne herself, like Charlotte Temple before her, is too contaminated to occupy the position of domestic woman in the nation of her origin. By contrast, Hester’s daughter is a product of a colonial liaison between two British people, Hester’s daughter, like Charlotte’s receives the blessing of her English father and undergoes a magical transformation that removes the stain of creolization so that she can reclaim her English parentage. If nineteenth and early twentieth-novels assume the very men and women who represent the English way of life on other continents are culturally tainted, then Conrad’s colonial adventurers discover dark inclinations within themselves that dispose them to go native.

By instigating much the same spirit of (white) nationalism at home as in the colonies, the captivity narrative accomplished two things at once: It differentiated each British nation from

every other, and it did so in a way that solidified England's status as the cultural core in relation both to its Celtic periphery and to the present and former British colonies.

**MB:** To this point, we've focused on the puritan or Mary Rowlandson narrative—which raises the question of how later traditions of captivity narratives challenge the cultural dominance of Mary Rowlandson's. I'm thinking, for example, of the 1824 bestseller *The Life of Mary Jemison* as told to (and written by) James E. Seaver which features a captive adopted by the Seneca. Jemison is twice married to Seneca men with whom she bears children. In your more recent work with Leonard Tennenhouse, *Novels in the Time of Democratic Writing: The American Example*, you shift your focus from puritan and secular versions of the American captivity narrative to the imported form of the Barbary captivity narrative. What effect does this shift have on your political understanding of the community to which readers were invited to imagine themselves belonging in this period of American history?

**NA:** In writing *The Imaginary Puritan*, Len and I became keenly aware that, within a decade after ratification of the US Constitution, the relation of the captivity narrative to the popular sense of nationalism was understandably no longer the same. In an *ALH* essay published in 2008 ("The Problem of Population and the Form of the American Novel"), we tackled the question of how the relation between national identity and the form of the American captivity narrative changed as British North America went from a loose and internally conflicted cluster of British colonies (each bound to the British Government by its own charter) to a nation of semi-autonomous states (each bound to its citizenry by state laws and bound to each other by a loose and internally conflicted form of government). You point to the fact that it was only later on that we took into account the contemporaneous appearance of two other forms of captivity narrative, one of which seemed diametrically opposed to the Mary Rowlandson story.

The best-selling account of Mary Jemison's captivity, published in 1824, featured the same scenario—a woman of British (Irish) origins taken in 1753 from her home by a raiding party of French and Native Americans—but to a very different outcome. Jemison's account, as told to the Reverend Seaver, does not weigh a future in heaven over survival in this world. Having been taken captive, Jemison was adopted into one Indian family, married off to another, and when that husband died on their return to his tribal home, she married a Seneca and bore him six children. If Mary Rowlandson's narrative made national identity a matter of (racial) purity-or-death, then Mary Jemison's valued cultural assimilation and endurance of incredible hardship for an uncertain future over both purity and death. We felt at the time that it was almost too easy to see the shift from the one set of narrative priorities (ethnic purity) to the other (hybridization) as a recalibration of British colonial identity for an emergent American nationalism. Our most recent work identifies three factors that confirm that impression.

First of all, the period when Mary Jemison's story was circulated in print was the same period when republication of Mary Rowlandson's story peaked. The early nineteenth-century readership was obviously hungry for both.

Second, American seduction stories (vs. their British counterparts) anticipated a heroine who, like Jemison and Hester Prynne, earns her status as heroine by “going native.” While Susanna Rowson and Hannah Foster do condemn their respective heroines to ignominious deaths, they do so in order to resurrect them as the heroines of seduction novels. This heroine is at once too sociable and trusting to survive in a world of strangers and so genial and deserving of sympathy as to provide the subject of a cautionary tale. At least three decades before Mary Jemison’s story appeared in print, American seduction novels had used certain elements of that story to modify the Rowlandson narrative. Why did these stories make readers hope against hope that the heroine would survive a pregnancy unsanctioned by marriage, unless these authors wanted to shift the value of human life from its traditional origins—whether in British blood or Christian soul—to the uncongenial American soil where these women had to live and die? Even before the Jemison story appeared in print, then, the two forms of captivity narrative were coming to an accommodation whereby they combined forces.

Arguably any culture—from tribal and classical myth to the Oedipal organization of the modern unconscious—tells stories about itself that symbolically resolve that culture’s foundational contradictions. It’s relatively easy to see how an amalgamation of the two prevalent forms of captivity narratives could have done just that for the new US culture in the two decades following ratification of the Constitution. Or rather, it would be easy, were it not for the fact that a third variety of this narrative, the Barbary Captivity narrative, enjoyed a surge of popularity during the heyday of the Rowlandson and Jemison stories. As the American novel incorporated this “foreign” narrative, the opposition between two indigenous accounts—one of a woman of British origins who maintains her ticket to Protestant heaven (Mary Rowlandson) and another of a woman who keeps both her scalp and a position within a tribal community (Mary Jemison)—collapsed. These arguments entered into a continuing debate over the character of the new nation and whether it was a pure or hybrid form of Englishness.

Both American narratives are opposed in this respect to the imported Barbary narrative, which pitted Americans against lawless international forces that threatened to strip the captive protagonist of the privileges and protections of US citizenship. Royall Tyler’s *The Algerine Captive* (1797) lays out this new configuration better than I can. The novel’s first section makes it impossible for someone from a northern state to make a home for himself in another region of the country, especially the American South, prompting the protagonist to enlist as a ship’s doctor and live on international waters. He is not on the high seas for more than a couple pages, however, before the ship’s crew and passengers are kidnapped and held for ransom by Algerine pirates. The protagonist goes through something like an inversion of the middle passage, where he suffers along with an international mix of passengers and a cargo of slaves and comes away with an invigorated conviction that “all men are brothers.” When it looks like his ransom is finally going to materialize, he is only too happy to return to the US.

Tempting as it was to read the relationship between the Rowlandson and Jemison narratives as the simple displacement of a colonial narrative by an indigenized national narrative, we found that the interaction of these three varieties of captivity narrative called for us to rethink the tension between the two Mary stories together forming one side of a new opposition. Once we

saw that the Barbary narrative offered an outside view in contrast to the inside view of what it means to be American provided by the Mary stories, we understood that the appearance of the two narratives in print at about the same time heralded the emergence of a new national narrative: an American who was not only rooted in national soil but also untethered from land and free to travel in the world without losing the rights and prerogatives of a citizen.

**MB:** In “Captivity and Cultural Capital in the English Novel” (1998), you discuss how 1970s feminisms redefined the home as a form of captivity from which the “ideal of the housewife” must be liberated, despite limitations in this journey from captivity to emancipation. In that article, you explore some of these contradictions through an analysis of films from the 1990s. What impact has feminism had on the captivity narrative?

**NA:** In the 1970’s, feminism embraced the ideology of the captivity narrative by proclaiming the domestic woman a captive in the household. This was done in the name of arguing for intellectual recognition and economic opportunity based on the fact that women lacked the recognition and the attendant opportunities available to their male counterparts. By “lack,” I’m not referring to some biological difference but rather to what Wendy Brown calls “a state of injury”—that is to say, the lack of masculine social, psychological, and intellectual attributes that modern cultures attribute to those who happen to be biologically female. Maintained by male dominated institutions, this cultural “injury” may well involve physical injury but more often makes itself felt by means of derogatory attitudes toward women, infantilizing stereotypes, and the limitation on income and positions of authority available to those that eschew domestic captivity, not to mention the legal measures that enforce masculine authority. You can see where Mary Jemison’s options were no less limited in this respect than Mary Rowlandson’s. In turning the captivity narrative against a definition of femininity that subordinates women to men, feminism has never quite managed to avoid the backlash that accompanies the sudden reversal of that narrative.

This became especially clear during the 1980’s and 1990’s, as feminism mounted an argument against the gender essentialism that made women out to be victims of biological difference and argued that they were victims of ideology instead—victims of the very ideology they had reproduced for over a century. Throughout modern history, we asked, haven’t women been at least as responsible as men for enforcing normative stereotypes of women as homebodies and helpmates who realize themselves in supplementing masculine labor and reproducing the gendered roles of producer and reproducer/consumer in the next generation? Not biological difference, we claimed, but these stereotypes and the attitudes, protocols of the workplace, and sex-biased laws they rationalize hold women captive to a political-economic order dominated by men. This turn against the idea that sexuality was a state of nature vs. culture actually did little to liberate us from the double bind encapsulated in the American captivity narrative and its British variations.

My reading of the progression of pop film star Demi Moore’s role from *Ghost* (1990) through *A Few Good Men* (1992) and *Disclosure* (1994) to *G.I. Jane* (1997) expressed that realization. I saw the metamorphosis of the woman she embodied—from the besieged sentimental woman,

to the moral reformer of military law, to the corporate executive and sexual predator, a conflict that achieves an uneasy compromise in *GI Jane*, when Moore becomes the first female Navy seal. This progression shows how quickly the figure of the captive can flip over and become the predator in relation to the male victim, all the more monstrous for assuming the form of a female. Feminist criticism was subject to the same reversibility.

Let a critic try to expose the double bind embodied in the captive woman, and that critic would find herself stuck in the bog of “woman’s nature,” right along with those we argued against—namely, those who drew authority from the gender norm. I find Wendy Brown especially clear on how this double bind continues to befuddle feminism into the present century. As presently constituted, feminism presupposes a social injury—some denial of equal rights, Brown maintains, essential to our identity as women. From this it follows that if women insist on redressing the very injury that defines them as women, then, as Brown says, those women are likely to be “maligned as selfish, irresponsible, or often, more to the point, simply unfeminine” (*Undoing the Demos* 158). Under what conditions, are the genders of victim and victimizer really all that reversible today?

**MB:** How do contemporary fiction and popular culture update the double bind in which it places women, particularly in the era of #MeToo? One of the inspirations for this special issue is the continued prevalence of captivity themed narratives in popular culture and the news—do you have any thoughts on contemporary iterations of the genre?

**NA:** Facebook CEO Sheryl Sandberg calls for women in the upper levels of technological workplaces to “lean in” rather than to “hang back.” By enjoining women to cease being women and enter the ranks of *homo economicus*, Sandburg implies that women will be economic losers unless they behave like men. Taking issue with Sandberg’s position that women have to behave like men in order to earn the same pay, Michelle Obama recently argued for a compromise formation. Obama contended that women need a cooperative partnership at home if they wanted to avoid doing double duty as unpaid homemaker and salaried professional, a situation that maintains traditional femininity by giving the advantage to male coworkers to be competitive as a salaried professional without neglecting their role as homemaker. The choice between the positions endorsed by Sandberg and Obama is not all that different from the choice between Mary Jemison’s pragmatic hybridity and Mary Rowlandson’s uncompromising femininity in that it is not really a choice at all. Either the woman sacrifices her womanhood—that is, goes native—and becomes a man to compete in the workplace, or they even the scales by requiring male partners to take on feminine responsibilities at home—ballbusters either way. More to the point, in either case, they maintain the single-family home as the foundational socio-economic unit of modern societies.

Under conditions of neoliberalism, neo-conservatism and free market economics converge on this one issue—that the single-family home should be held responsible for the health, education, and welfare of the national population. This became the rationale for repealing what remained of the welfare state. The single-family household sustained by the woman’s unpaid labor has consequently become the indebted household, bequeathing enormous debt along with its



investments in the economic future to successive generations. While I have no authoritative statistics to back up this claim, there is no question in my mind that the number of sustainable households with a single breadwinner has precipitously declined in the last thirty years or so, along with the number of households that can afford to hire domestic labor. Thus, it is unlikely that the options discussed by Sandburg and Obama are available to more than 10% percent of the population in developed nations. Their argument does tell us, however, that men and women are entering a very different workplace today than the industrial workplace from which women were banished to the household over a century and a half ago.

How did the social character of the workplace, including the academy, have to change before women could demand admission to the top echelons of management? With the decreasing number of people employed in productive labor, and a corresponding increase in jobs in various fields of technology, the service professions, and the most basic skills once sequestered within the domestic unit, has the demand for equal pay indeed been inching toward its goal? If so, we must ask, for whom is it succeeding? We know that the income gap within the male labor force has widened and deepened since the 1980s, but I am guessing (these statistics are rarely aired) that the gap within the ranks of women between those at the top and those at the bottom of the income ladder is wider and deeper than the gap between men and women of equal rank. If we consider only the 10% or less of the population climbing their ways into relatively secure high paying jobs, we could then probably say that women as a group constitute an underpaid majority.

However underpaid we may or may not be, would those of us in university positions think of exchanging our positions in the contemporary workforce for those of gardening, cooking meals, caring for children, or cleaning house for salaried professionals? To the contrary, we now depend on a supply of infinitely replaceable workers to perform forms of feminized labor for pay that, through the 1950s, women supposedly performed for the sheer love of family and home. If it was once in her capacity as an unpaid, fulltime household manager that the modern woman performed as the national culture bearer, then who we must ask, fills that role now? Has the disappearance of the form of servitude to which the postwar economy had condemned women as their patriotic duty and source of gratification diminished the power inhering in the figure of the captive woman? If so, what power, if any inheres in a feminist critique? Is that power still contingent, as Brown says, on addressing an injury, that should women address it, defines them as aggressive, masculine, even monstrous? To address this final question, I want to consider briefly who plays the victim and who the savage in the captivity narrative as it tends to be mobilized by today's media.

This question is, if anything, too easy to answer, because the answer depends entirely on who is mobilizing the captivity narrative. To go by the right and alt-right media, the straight white male is the unemployed and disenfranchised victim of an institutional elite composed of trained government officials and overeducated bureaucrats in general, who might as well be women insofar as they work side by side with, if not under women. Despite Hillary Clinton's arrogance in assuming the position of head of the liberal party was rightfully hers, despite, too, the unqualified support for her candidacy by the liberal media and her ability to attract a popular

majority, she was destined to lose. Apparently just enough people voted for Trump because he was not Hillary, thus not an educated woman, to earn him the votes necessary in the electoral college. There is no question, however, that these factors would not have been enough, had he not done such a masterful job of refiguring his own masculine monstrosity—as pussy grabber, corrupt businessman, incompetent politician, and psychologically unstable—as that of his female opponent. Hence Hillary was a “facilitator” of her husband’s peccadillos, a “crooked” business woman in league with foreign powers, a careless custodian of national security, a policy wonk, and a “low energy” individual to boot. What daily proved to be acceptable qualities in a male candidate for US President made her many times a monster who came to embody the very qualities responsible for victimizing the forgotten and very angry straight white American male.

This delicate balancing act requires a trickster—not learned behavior but a capacity to occupy simultaneously the positions of victim and bully. If reactionary white male nationalism appropriated the power of the victim in relation to the neoliberal professional classes embodied in the monstrous figure of Hillary Clinton, then that same brand of nationalism reclaims its masculinity in an utterly traditional way by saving white America from the rapists, drug dealers, and carriers of infectious disease summed up in the apocalyptic figure of a wave of migrants pouring over the US-Mexico border. In these charges we can hear the voice of white colonial culture claiming, as Gayatri Spivak said of the British in India, to rescue brown women from the abuses of brown men. Should this collusion of a damaged personality type with a national narrative seem too powerful to resist, we should remember the reversibility inherent in the figure of the captive.

In the wake of Hillary’s defeat, we saw panoramic television displays of pussy-hat demonstrations across the US and Western Europe. In a number of highly publicized law suits against male predators in the entertainment business, we saw the willingness of women to mount successful law suits and media campaigns against prominent figures in entertainment and government. But only time will tell whether the bullying power of the media necessarily works on behalf of women or against them. The compelling legal testimony of Christine Blasey Ford against Supreme Court nominee Brett M. Kavanaugh—a woman mobilizing the force of a Senate hearing and sympathetic media—could neither prevent the counterassault on herself and family by social media nor prevent the man she accused from making a successful claim that he was the victim. It was as if nothing had changed from the time of Anita Hill’s testimony at the Clarence Thomas hearings thirty-five years ago. The number of women who flooded the twitter sphere with similar stories was marshalled in support of a narrative that men are being tried and found guilty on the basis of uncorroborated rumor, innuendo, and spotty memory. I confess that I’m relieved that #MeToo stopped just short of the tipping point where it might have ceased to operate as a therapeutic medium and become another form of cyber bullying. Were this to happen, it would certainly blunt the most important political weapon in its arsenal, which is the collective power to push for, publicize, and advance the case law on sexual harassment and assault. Hence my question: if neither the economically powerful male predator nor his professional female prey is in any real sense the victim of a captivity narrative that each claims to be, then who plays the captive now?

Two things remain consistent throughout the many role reversals that have accompanied the mischaracterizations of captive and predator in the American captivity narrative. These are the tightly related tropes of mischaracterization and reversibility themselves. Assuming that the most extravagant mischaracterization of captive and predator indicates the greatest potential for their reversal, I would urge us to look for the most egregious distortions of those roles that are now contending for media prominence. I would eliminate our current President on grounds that he is the singular figure of mischaracterization itself—both the white male victim and the bully who takes no prisoners—and therefore not the face of those who are likely to be so classified. This leaves two choices for the role of victim on today's cultural horizon: the abused professional women who rally around the flag of #MeToo and the caravan of refugees who have traveled the length of Mexico in search of asylum. Where the one is a socially limited but culturally advantaged group of professional woman who find themselves in a workplace where they can be put in their places as women by powerful men, the other is a migrant population of disposable labor, a figure that tends to remain invisible unless demonized or until they die (photographically) spectacular deaths at the hands of Americans who were supposed to provide asylum. (Mis)characterized by the right as potential rapists, from whom American men must save American women, today's migrant actually occupies the role of the feminized captive. Still thinking in terms of the American captivity narrative, this development clearly puts us in new cultural territory.

The captivity narrative served as a foundational fiction by legitimating the British defense of hearth and home in a "wilderness," thereby owning and privatizing what was someone else's land. In doing, so it gave the British a form of novel they could use to claim cultural superiority over a licentious aristocracy, as well as to the native populations they colonized. In a period when whole populations are on the move across the globe, as well as in Central America, however, the concept of disposable labor is rapidly displacing unpaid domestic labor. Today's corporate culture depends on this invisible labor force to maintain, tear down, remake, clean, and supply the depersonalized spaces that many of today's salaried professionals consider home. To acknowledge this general disavowed partnership between dislocated populations and the international corporate culture ultimately responsible for dislocating them, recent novels refuse the traditional obligation to perform the heterosexual negotiations composing the marriage plot in order to demonstrate the involuntary interdependence of the migrant and the men and women of the new professional-managerial class. As early as the novels of Octavia Butler that inspired Donna Haraway's figure of the Cyborg, novels had begun to think in earnest that it was not their job to reproduce the modern bourgeois family as both the model and basic unit of a national community, and a whole range of novels from Don DeLillo's classic *Underworld*, to Jennifer Egan's *A Visit From the Goon Squad*, Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Joseph O'Neil's *Netherland*, Colson Whitehead's *Zone One* and *Underground Railroad*, and my personal favorite, Rachel Kushner's *The Mars Room* make it impossible to imagine such a community taking shape.

This plot not only shows precisely how the relationship of the two allows the latter to exploit the infinitely replaceable, underpaid, and feminized migrant labor force; it also exposes that there is only a national border to distinguish those on whose feminized labor we depend for traditional

homemaking and the migrants who are currently being demonized as rapists, criminals, and drug dealers. Whether inside or outside that boundary, insofar as they embody potential citizenship, they also augur a qualitative transformation of geopolitical categories, which might be seen as a reversal of the first and second waves of European colonialism. Although a historical change of this magnitude is understandably figured in monstrous terms, the actors in the scenario of the captivity narrative embodied this potential from the very first. Indeed, rather than a valiant stand of white American men against the alien hoard, we hear reports and see images of children in cages surrounded by US immigration officials. This, I would argue, suggests that the captivity narrative is once again gathering together the historical materials at hand in order to resituate the question of national identity on an international terrain. Chances are good that the figure of the migrant as potential citizen will eventually assume the role of captive under assault by hostile forms of nationalism. One can only hope.