

The Captor's Narrative: Catholic Women and Their Puritan Men on the Early American Frontier. By William Henry Foster. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003. Pp. ix, 205. \$29.95.)

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William Foster has written a historically suggestive book. If it sometimes falters at the level of interpretation, it raises new questions about early modern women in French Canada, about Anglo-American male and female captives controlled by French Canadian Catholic women, and about the ways in which these groups not only intersected but also understood and wrote about their interactions.

The book is organized by chapters titled for the spatial sites inhabited by women and their captives—farm, frontier, household, and so forth. Within and across chapters, Foster alternately separates and weaves together three strands. The first examines the lives and motivations of French Canadian Catholic women for buying and using Anglo-American captives during the colonial wars of the late seventeenth and mid-eighteenth century. Some lives considered here, like those of Marguerite Bourgeoys (founder of the originally lay women's community the *Congrégation Notre-Dame de Montréal*) and Agathe de Saint-Père (purported founder of the Canadian textile industry), are well known in Canadian scholarship. Foster usefully introduces them to U.S. scholars, among whom a focus on French Canada, colonial Catholicism, and Catholic women is receiving renewed attention. He takes his own slant on these women by placing their stories in the context of the need for captive labor in French Canada. But Foster does not rely on more visible, high-status figures; he reconstructs the lives of a variety of women both from fragments of the historical and genealogical record and from their very erasure or diminishment in Anglo-male captivity narratives. We learn of Marguerite and Louise Guyon, who came from the "middling sort" (p. 108) and made their lives precariously in French Acadia during "King Williams' War" of the 1690s. Though Marguerite appears only briefly in returned captive John Gyles's narrative, Foster constructs probable aspects of her life by comparing Gyles's claims to her family history. What Gyles often represents as his gentility or mastery vis-à-vis Marguerite Foster instead reads as Marguerite's own clever management of her captive. Foster similarly reconstructs aspects of the authority of Josette Lorrain, a low-status girl mentioned in the diaries of two Anglo prisoners held in Quebec in the 1740s. Describing the probable contexts of French Canadian prison life and the specific roles of the prisonkeeper and his family, Foster disputes male diarists' sentimentalized portrait of Josette as "an angel of mercy" (p. 159).

In addition to reconstructing different arenas in which these women exercised authority, Foster explores shifts in their motivations for using captives. Although nuns like Marguerite Bourgeoys might have justified their need for workers by linking their obedient service to God with their power to coerce service from male captives, high-status Catholic laywomen like Agathe de Saint-Père felt no such need to defend their entrepreneurial interests or coercive activities. Even Josette Lorrain, viewing herself as the state's agent, presumably did not see her treatment of Anglo-American prisoners as possessing any religious valence. By the mid-eighteenth century, there remains little sense of the potent intersection of faith, gender, status, and politics that Foster finds fifty years earlier.

The book's second strand details stories of Anglo captives. Foster reconstructs their grandparents' and parents' lives, the stories of their captivity with varying tribal groups (especially among native women), and, most compellingly, the stories of their captivities in New France. Using marriage and baptismal records, hospital records, and written communications among captives and New English emissaries, he uncovers who sponsored whom, who treated whom, who married, who

fled, and who remained. Particularly striking is Foster's recovery of captives missing from the record. Once-lost captives like Matthew Pauling, Jean Andresse, and Edward Barlow reappear as patients at the Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal and then presumably work for or are sold by the hospital's nuns (pp. 82-84). Court and baptismal records reveal the names of at least five captives redeemed by Agathe de Saint-Père to work in her home or workshop (pp. 135-136).

Foster's treatment of female captives is less comprehensive. His primary interest is women who committed themselves to the (Catholic) religious life. In great detail, he imagines the early captivity experience of Lydia Longley, taken at age twenty in a 1694 Abenaki raid on Groton and bought by a wealthy French Canadian businessman. In Jacques Le Ber's household, Longley encountered African and white male captives as well as his odd daughter, Jeanne, who lived a cloistered life but refused to join an order. By 1696, Lydia has opted to convert and to join the Congrégation Notre-Dame de Montréal. By 1736, now running the congregation's farm outside the city, she was responsible not only for her fellow sisters but also for Anglo male captives who worked for them. Other women captives who remained in Canada in a religious capacity include Mary Silver, who became a nurse and rumored proselytizer of captives, and Mary Anne Davis. Remembered by Deerfield minister John Williams as passive and nameless, Davis was in fact active as a proselytizer among Indians and captives. Especially suggestive are the possible connections Foster locates among converted women who chose to stay.

The book's third strand attempts to recover how early modern conceptions of gender inflected captors' and captives' views of themselves and of each other. Using Foster's small sample to make large generalizations, this strand is the book's least convincing primarily because of its rather flat conceptions of gender, power, and their interrelation. Fascinating French Canadian captors, religious and lay, are here interpreted as operating out of a static gender system in which their control of male captives remains relatively uncomplicated even as their colony changes. Foster initially grants Anglo women a more-nuanced response to gender and status issues, speculating on how their Puritan upbringing as girls coalesced and differed from the training of Canadiennes. Too often, however, he reads these women's responses to captivity, conversion, and expatriation as both motivated and explained by an uncomplicated desire for the freedoms granted to nuns. In some ways, Foster's male captives possess the most complex subjectivities. They are shocked, angry, rebellious, and prone to flee, not because they are prisoners of war, but largely because of the inverted gender position Canadian women force them to occupy. That such is the case is evidenced not only by Foster's data on female ownership of captives but also by the erasures or misrepresented power relations between captive and female captor he locates in male captivity narratives.

Foster's reading of Gyles's narrative has some merit in light of his meticulous account of Gyles's mistress, Marguerite Guyon, but his tendency to use what male narratives say and don't say primarily as evidence of negative responses to women's authority clearly has limits. Focusing on a simple model of gender inversion not only ignores important questions like publication dates, possible audiences, and literary conventions used in these texts; it also neglects the multiple understandings of gender and authority they display. Deerfield captive John Williams represents himself in a passive, feminized relationship to both his God and his French Catholic captors. Authorized by biblical and cultural precedents, captive Hannah Dustan actively murdered ten Indians. And John Gyles's text, highlighting the numerous roles Gyles performed to survive, reveals the protean, rather than singular, nature of any identity and authority on the frontier. Foster's suggestive study, rich in original data and stories of cross-cultural interactions, will prompt new questions about both the relation of archive to narrative and the categories we use to interpret the complexity of early colonial identities.