

**“But cutting off the *Scalps of the Ten Wretches*”<sup>1</sup>:**

**Reading Hannah Dustan’s Captivity Narrative through the Body**

**Veronika Hofstätter**

ABSTRACT: This paper examines Cotton Mather’s account of Hannah Dustan’s captivity and its representation of white and Native American bodies in the context of an early colonial, Puritan framework. The analysis of the account shows how bodies are used to translate and question concepts of Otherness in early New England. The performance of bodies in the narrative serves as a representational device to utilize agents of ambivalence and deviation from a conventional captivity formula.

KEYWORDS: Hannah Dustan, body, performance, captivity narrative

**Introduction**

“Her story has everything: blondness, kidnapping, a villain with an accent, it’s a perfect TV movie” (“Grandmentor” 6:19–6:27).

With these words, Jenna Maroney, the narcissistic actress character of Tina Fey’s acclaimed satirical television series *30 Rock*, tries to convince the channel’s vice president Jack Donaghy in season 6 (2012) to produce a television movie out of his news anchor’s wife’s kidnapping in North Korea. Although this kidnapping plot is obviously inserted as a parody element into the television comedy, that single sentence contains the conventional elements of a traditional captivity narrative formula.

The genre of the North American Indian captivity narrative most prominently goes back to Mary Rowlandson’s *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* from 1682. *30 Rock*’s call for blondness can be read as a marker for a white, European/Anglo-American—with Rowlandson in particular an English Puritan—body. In contrast to that white body, the members of Pocasset, Wampanoag, and Nipmuc tribes who attacked Rowlandson’s home in Lancaster, Massachusetts, and took her captive during Metacom’s rebellion in 1676, also known as King Philip’s War, represent the Indian Other as “Barbarous Creatures” or what the twenty-first-century television

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<sup>1</sup> Cotton Mather, “A Notable Exploit ; wherein, Dux Faemina Facti” in *Decennium Luctuosum* (1699), 143. All emphases and capitalization in original unless stated otherwise.

character describes as “villain[s] with an accent” (Rowlandson 5; “Grandmentor” 6:19–6:27).<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, such a captivity narrative formula includes a major kidnapping plot with conflicting captors and captives structured in stereotypical, binary oppositions emphasizing confrontational representations of the portrayed bodies. Gary Ebersoles states that, “since the seventeenth century, tales of captivity have been used in the Euro-American world in diverse ways as vehicle for reflection on larger social, religious and ideological issues”—a tradition that Jenna Maroney’s idea for the television movie takes up to refer to contemporary US relations with North Korea (2). Thus, we can identify the same details—that would make *30 Rock*’s imagined captivity story a “perfect TV movie” today—in Rowlandson’s bestseller, which was already published in four editions in New and old England in its first year of publication: 1682 (Kolodny 185).

When shifting the focus away from twenty-first-century narratives and their parodies to North American Indian captivity narratives and colonial New England with Hannah Dustan’s narrative in particular, these representations deploy Native American and non-Indian bodies in performance. Joseph Roach points out that, in general, performances “make publicly visible through symbolic action both the tangible existence of social boundaries and, at the same time, the contingency of those boundaries on fictions of identity, their shoddy construction out of inchoate otherness, and consequently, their anxiety-inducing instability” (39). In the context of Cotton Mather’s captivity narrative of Hannah Dustan, called “*A Notable Exploit; wherein, Dux Faemina Facti*” as part of his *Decennium Luctuosum* of 1699, the English settler woman’s body not only transgresses social boundaries of the conventional dichotomy of English settler victim versus Native American aggressor but also unsettles the established gender construction by imitating Native male scalping methods and killing her captors.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly the bodies of Hannah Dustan

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<sup>2</sup> For a recent discussion of Mary Rowlandson’s captivity narrative, see for example Bill J. Stratton, *Buried in Shades of Night* (2013).

<sup>3</sup> If not indicated otherwise, for the quotations I use modern letters but reproduce the printed version of 1697’s capitalization and its use of italics.

as well as of the murdered Native American family exceed those “social boundaries” of seventeenth-century Puritan New England. Dustan’s performance simultaneously brings the binary understanding of “inchoate otherness” with regard to the opposing bodies into question.

I read the ambiguous use of bodies in Cotton Mather’s captivity narrative of Hannah Dustan as textual representations of performance through and of the body by which racial and gendered Othering, and power structures are questioned, interpreted, and justified. Reading the body as a physical and metaphorical performative expression, I argue that the bodily performances in Hannah Dustan’s captivity narrative as it is transmitted to us through Mather’s narrative voice in *Decennium Luctuosum* serve as a projection screen of ambivalence in the narrative. After a short overview of the genre of North American captivity narrative, its features, and the current scope of research, the paper introduces the framework of body. Then the focus shifts to Cotton Mather’s narrative of Hannah Dustan’s captivity to put it into its early colonial cultural, social, and political context. The analytical reading of Dustan’s captivity narrative through the body and its representations uncovers the ambivalent nature of this foundational text as well as the multiple uses and functions of this text enabled by its displayed ambivalence.

### **Bodies and the North American Indian Captivity Narrative: An Overview**

North American Indian captivity narratives are often considered to be a distinctly US American genre, which underwent changes and simultaneously held on to several basic elements in the narratives. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola broadly differentiates between “the captivity narrative” that “encompass[es] any story with a captor (usually from a minority group) and a captive (usually from a majority group)” —obviously not distinctly American—and the “Indian captivity narrative” as “stories of non-Indians captured by Native Americans” geographically located in North America (*Women’s Indian* xi).

Recent research emphasizes this difference, as the field of Captivity Narrative Studies uses a broader take on narratives of captivity with the North American Indian

captivity narrative being a subcategory of such a focus (Derounian-Stodola, “Consciousness” 716).<sup>4</sup> In the Americas, the taking of captives was common practice in warfare between the tribes and later also between Native Americans and settlers (Namias 2).<sup>5</sup> While the narratives merely portray the captivity of non-Indians, they commonly leave out that European colonialists regularly took indigenous captives, for example to serve as slaves or to be shown off as ‘exotic Other’ to the curious audience in ‘the old world’ (Namias 2). Due to some similarly portrayed details of their Indian captors, the North American Indian captivity narrative is commonly identified with John Smith’s report of his captivity in his *Generall History of Virginia* (1624), particularly with Mary Rowlandson’s *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* as its starting and reference point (Sayre, *Captivity* 2–3; Kolodny 186). In order to avoid a particular exceptional status of North American Indian captivity narratives in early modern colonial times, it is important to include other colonial narratives of captivity, like the corpus of Barbary captivity narratives of North Africa, narratives of New Spain like Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca’s *Naufragios* (1542), of New France like missionary Isaac Jogues’s *Novum Belgium* (1655), or of Portuguese Brazil like Hans Staden’s *The True History of His Captivity* of 1557. Many of these were written and published far earlier than Rowlandson’s account (Sayre, “Transnational” 327).

While North American Indian captivity narratives (many of them highly popular bestsellers) have strongly influenced the development of US American literatures with an enormous corpus of texts, recent research on captivity studies, as Sayre claims, tries to trace the transnational links between those narratives and concepts such as “US nationalism, whiteness, and imperialism” (Sayre, “Transnational” 327–28).<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, the reading of captivity narratives through the framework of

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<sup>4</sup> In 2008, Derounian-Stodola points out that “classic criticism on the potency of Indian captivity narratives in American literature and culture [...] treats the term “captivity narrative” as virtually synonymous with “Indian captivity narrative” (“Consciousness” 716).

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of European and Indian captivity practices and reasons, see June Namias’s “Introduction” of *White Captives* (1993), 1-17; Also see chapter 1 of Pauline Turner Strong’s *Captive Selves, Captivating Others* (1999), 1-18.

<sup>6</sup> Research on captivity narratives has experienced a recent shift to open up the corpus as Gordon M. Sayre did with his anthology *American Captivity Narratives*, published in the year 2000. In 1999 Paul Baepler published *White Slaves, African Masters*, an anthology about Barbary captivity narratives of Americans taken captive in North Africa. For another selection of Barbary captivity narratives, see Daniel J. Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*

bodies as transmitters to translate these concepts is a fruitful approach not only for North American Indian narratives but also to transnationally link the portrayal of the depicted bodies in a broad understanding and investigate their points of contact, their connections, and interplays in an early modern colonial context.

Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter, in their “Introduction” to *The Body in Early America*, characterize bodies as “a cloth woven with complex cultural meanings” and as “maps for reading the past through lived experience, metaphorical expression, and precepts of representation” (2). It is of particular importance to use these “maps” in their cultural contexts and understand not only the captives’ but also the captors’ bodies and their performances as “surfaces of indscription [and] loci of control” (“Introduction” 2). Bodies in early colonial narratives, like Hannah Dustan’s, were particularly shaped and affected by the European culture of their creators’ origins and as a result also significantly by encounters of colonial contact and coexistence of diverse social and cultural groups in the early colonies (Sorisio).

We see a general pattern at the beginning of all these narratives: Namely, bodies—own and Other—confront each other in a conflicting manner for various reasons. The survival, preservation and, at least at the narratives’ beginning, the physical as well as metaphorical isolation and segregation of captive bodies from Native American bodies constitutes the importance of their representations and instrumentalization. The captives’ bodies are constantly questioned and confirmed in their context of own and Other, which, as a result, characterizes and also structures such narratives. From the captives’ perspectives, their bodies are captured, taken away from familiar grounds, properties, and family members; their bodies have to adapt to completely unknown ways of life; the captives are forced to master physical activities and challenges and feel hunger and pain; they are starved and nourished, often unwillingly, with alien foods; their bodies are punished, tortured, harassed, but also often adopted and loved. Thus, captivity narratives should clearly be read “through the body” for a fuller understanding of these texts.

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from 2001. For a recent scholarly discussion of captivity studies, see Gordon M. Sayre’s “Renegades from Barbary: The Transnational Turn in Captivity Studies” (2010). For an example of a transnational case study, see Kay Schaffer and D’Arcy Randall, “Transglobal Translations: The Eliza Fraser and Rachel Plummer Captivity Narratives” (2001).

When it comes to the captors' perspective it obviously becomes more complicated due to the bias of the narrator. Therefore, literary representations of Native American bodies need to be read with this in mind. A number of narratives on Indian captivity from 'white Indians,' who were taken captive, adopted, and lived as integrated members of the tribe—and told their stories later in life—do exist, like *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* from 1824. Jemison told her biography to James E. Seaver, who was commissioned to record her narrative based on interviews, which hence again poses questions about his influence on the textual production but allows an insight into a less binary depiction and a more complex understanding of Native Americans' lives and living situations.<sup>7</sup>

Although these narratives are far more diverse than often acknowledged, the Indian captivity narrative in particular deals with the capture of a non-Indian individual or small groups of captives (often family members) and "its plot is most commonly resolved with the captive's escape, ransom, transculturation, or death" (Derounian-Stodola, *Women's Indian* xi).<sup>8</sup> Gordon M. Sayre describes the genre as either "melodramatic anti-Indian texts about captives who resisted assimilation and that offered no ethnography" or "more sympathetic accounts by captives [...] who were proud to have assimilated their captor's culture" (*Captivity* 12).<sup>9</sup> Narratives of violent conflicts and captivities in the literary tradition of the American Indian captivity narrative begin in the seventeenth century in a strongly religious framework, like the

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<sup>7</sup> Mary Jemison, for example, accuses the introduction of alcohol as a vice, which was brought to her tribe by non-Indians and as partly responsible for "such devastation in [their] tribes, and threatens the extinction of [their] people" as "not even the love of life will restrain an Indian from sipping the poison that he knows will destroy him" (208).

<sup>8</sup> Concerning Indian captivity June Namias explains that "[c]apture as seen by most whites in North America was an act of brutality and savagery against an innocent, civilized, and superior foe, one aspect of what was labeled 'savage war.' It employed elements not found in European warfare in the early modern or modern periods—a forced, prolonged imprisonment with the enemy, a fearful contamination, a separation from one's community, a loss of spouse and children, and a communion with or at least relentless exposure to representatives of devil" (2-3).

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the genre, see for example Benjamin Mark Allen, *Naked and Alone in a Strange World* (2009); Gary L. Ebersole, *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Post-Modern Images of Indian Captivity* (1995); Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, ed. *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives* (1998); Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900* (1993); June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (1993); Gordon M. Sayre, ed. *American Captivity Narratives* (2000).

early Puritan and Quaker narratives, which later “became more formulaic” (Namias 22). In the eighteenth century, captivity narratives took a turn towards more secular concerns as they were especially functionalized as war propaganda to propagate westward expansion and to decry the various enemies of the soon-to-be and then young United States. They therefore also feature French characters (e.g. in the context of the French and Indian War), different tribes of Native-Americans, and English individuals linked to the Revolutionary War (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 23, 26–27; Strong 19; Kolodny 187).

Another significant turn toward sensationalism, pulp fiction, and the dime novel appears in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, when what Kolodny calls “authentic narratives” and completely fictional captivity narratives are concurrently put on the market (186). The qualification of “authenticity” is determined in fictional and non-fictional narratives according to the factuality of the captivity experience: A fine line that is often hard, if not impossible to draw. Nevertheless, as Gordon M. Sayre claims, “it is the common techniques that fiction and non-fiction literature employ toward readers that are of interest” (*Captivity* 17). Anthologies, children’s books, and visual representations like paintings or captive memorials as well as American novelists picked up the popular captivity theme, for example in Charles Brockden Brown’s *Edgar Huntly* (1799) and James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) (Sayre, *Captivity* 17; Strong 2; Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 25).

With regard to a captivity formula, Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier explain that “if one reads many captivity accounts, they tend to merge together stylistically because, like formula fiction today, distinct style was commercially risky” and, accordingly, a deviation from genre conventions would be harder to sell in mass market (106). As the *30 Rock* example has shown, the themes and elements of the captivity formula—adapted to current contexts—are still highly prominent in twentieth-century and contemporary texts and productions, in films such as *The Revenant* (2016), in which the captivity theme is introduced through the kidnapping of an Arikara chief’s daughter in 1823. *The Revenant*’s French fur trappers—who kidnapped the Arikara woman—perform a power play by repetitively

using and abusing her body, leaving her physically and mentally marked. She is not depicted as a round character with many dialogues but her wounded body reflects the contemporary cultural circumstances of struggles for power, money and superiority. Tracy C. Davis states that “[s]ometimes the experience of a body is sensory, sometimes highly abstracted by medicalization or otherwise. Our bodies both form and are formed by our identities; our identities, in turn, citationally reflect our surroundings and circumstances” (7). The instrumentalization of captivity narratives for cultural and political reasons, like propaganda or the justification of Indian removal, as well as their portrayal and representative use of bodies are highly relevant for the purpose of identity formation. They translate concepts of Otherness and either confirm or question—often culturally imposed— boundaries between the encountering individuals and groups.

For Tracy C. Davis, “we negotiate life as social beings—sometimes but not always consciously, sometimes but not always overtly—we perform” (7). Accordingly, Hannah Dustan is described to perform a meaningful act in the context of its time in Mather’s narrative. In my analysis of Dustan’s captivity narrative, I follow Richard Schechner’s understanding that a text despite its “materiality” as a written document “can be performative or can be analyzed ‘as’ performance” despite its “materiality” as a written document because it “means to investigate what the object does, now it interacts with other objects or beings, and how it relates to other object or beings” (30).<sup>10</sup> This interaction emphasizes the ambivalent character of bodily representations and performative acts of bodies as the narrative does particularly not follow—considering the Puritan writing tradition— the assumed scheme of ‘good’ and ‘bad.’ For instance, Hannah Dustan transgresses encoded gender and race roles through her act of killing and scalping the supposed aggressors who in turn become passive victims. As Birgit M. Bauridl claims in a different context,

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<sup>10</sup> Again I follow Schechner here who points out: “There are limits to what ‘is’ performance. But just about anything can be studied ‘as’ performance. Something ‘is’ a performance when historical and social context, convention, usage, and tradition say it is. Rituals, play and games, and the roles of everyday life are performances because convention, context, usage, and tradition say so. One cannot determine what ‘is’ a performance without referring to specific cultural circumstances” (38).

“[c]ulture becomes determined and existent through and in performances” (54). Hence, the cultural circumstances and ‘rules’ of Puritan New England are unsettled as Hannah Dustan does not perform according to the binary framework these rules seek to uphold.

Among others, Richard Schechner describes the function of performances as “to make or foster community” and “to teach, persuade, or convince”—two functions that are relevant in the context of Dustan’s account (46). The narrative clearly points out, exemplified through the threat to the captives’ bodies, the dangers of Indian attacks and captivity, and thereby teaches the Puritan community to stick to their faith in God, highlights their shared beliefs, and confirms the Native Americans’ assumed Otherness based on their cruel behavior and intentions. But Mather’s complex narrative not only confirms the Indian Other but also criticizes the Puritan community, which will be shown later.

The ambivalent character of Mather’s account, majorly responsible for its fame and canonical status in the context of the genre as well as in US-American literature in general, becomes even more apparent when read through the framework of body and its performances.

### **Sites of Negotiation: Reading the Body in Dustan’s Captivity Narrative**

Cotton Mather integrated Hannah Dustan’s captivity narrative into a sermon, *Humiliations Follow’d With Deliverances*, published in 1697, in his *Decennium Luctuosum* of 1699, and in his *Magnalia Christi Americana* of 1702 (Cutter 28). When the focus is put on early Indian captivity narratives it is necessary to consider Cotton Mather, one of the most prominent Puritan ministers and influential intellectuals of colonial New England society, because he was deeply concerned with the topic of white captivity, Indian captors, the impact of captivity narratives on New England society, and its contribution to the continuation of prevailing power structures. He recorded, interpreted, and commented on such accounts in great detail in many of his writings and sermons. In his *Decennium Luctuosum: A History of Remarkable Occurrences in the Long War, which New England hath had with the Indian Savages 1688-1698*, for example, he gives explicit reports in thirty so-called “articles” with

Dustan's story as "ARTICLE XXV" of Indian violence against non-Indian, English settlers and with a special focus on attacks and violence against women and children (Mather 138; Toulouse 195).<sup>11</sup> Overall his text offers a detailed list of captivity's grievances for women and men, like Nathanael White's forced consumption of his own ear, famed Hannah Dustan's captivity, scalping, and escape, or the torture and murder of young James Key (79; 138-41; 51).<sup>12</sup>

Drawing on and referring to such captivity experiences and narratives in this significant document, Mather uses the body as a site where life in the early colonies is evaluated, judged, and justified. In his "*Observable Things The History of Ten Years Rolled away under the great Calamities of A WAR WITH Indian Savages*" published as part of *Decennium Luctuosum* and concerned with the threats for women in Indian captors' hands, he asks: "How many a Fearful Thing has been suffered by the Fearful Sex from those *men* that one would *Fear as Devils* rather than men?" (Mather 220).<sup>13</sup> With this question, he introduces a short passage about captive women, the permanent threats for them, and their experiences.

Based on his background as a member of the leading elite, Mather's question unveils several important aspects of his understanding and the performance of bodies in a colonial New England and particular captivity context. Accordingly, "one," i.e. everyone should fear Native American men because they are portrayed not only as inhuman but as "devils" themselves.<sup>14</sup> As embodiments of 'all evil' the non-English or

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<sup>11</sup> About its scholarly perception, Teresa A. Toulouse writes that Mather's *Decennium Luctuosum* "has been read as an oddly secularized text that moves away from the standard ministerial interpretation of colonial events" and points out that one of its "key purposes is to castigate certain colonial men for their lack of an appropriate defense of the colonies and for their corresponding lack of appropriate New English 'maleness'" (195).

<sup>12</sup> Different editions and materials offer a spelling variety of her last name: it appears as "Dustin," "Duston," or "Dustan." My spelling follows Mather's version in *Decennium-Luctuosum* of 1699.

<sup>13</sup> *Observable Things The History of Ten Years Rolled away under the great Calamities of A WAR WITH Indian Savages* is included in *Decennium Luctuosum* (page 201-54) but with an individual preface and a title page; the page number count continues.

<sup>14</sup> The portrayal of Native Americans is strongly characterized by a significant yet changing set of stereotypes applied by the colonizers, which cannot be separated from "ideology and moral judgment" and Native Americans were used as projection screen of white "counterimages" (Berkhofer 27). According to Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., "the Indians north of Mexico came to loom large in the French image of the Noble Savage" which was introduced by French Jesuit missionaries, continued and then turned into "the Noble American Indian as a critic of European society and culture [...] from the late sixteenth century to the late seventeenth century" by French writers and scholars, like Michel de Montaigne (Berkhofer

non-Puritan Others commit countless “fearful things” against the bodies of white women. The question of sexual harassment and rape in early New England and whether this was indeed something female captives had to face is still hard to answer as many early narratives either keep silent about such incidents or deny that they fell victim to such treatment during captivity.<sup>15</sup> Mather also does not include examples of sexual abuse in particular, but mentions the captives being eyewitnesses to the murder of their husbands and children, as participants of forced marches into the ‘wilderness’ with their captors, or being in danger of becoming a servant to “some Filthy and ugly Squaw’s [sic]” (220). However, Mather implies such abuse without clearly mentioning it by pointing to the numberless “Fearful Thing[s]” as opposed to “earlier narratives [...] [in comparison to e.g. nineteenth-century narratives] merely toy[ing] with the possibility of rape” (Mather 220; Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 125).

He thus exploits the access to and the ‘use’ of the white, female body as a privilege of white non-Indian men to further degenerate Native male bodies. Judith Butler argues that “the body is the blindspot of speech, that which acts in excess of what is said, but which also acts in and through what is said” (*Excitable* 11). Thus, corporeality in colonial New England as depicted in captivity narratives is not just textualized in the sense of a mere physical description of settler and Native

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74-75). However, for the English and the English colonies “the literary and ideological use of the Noble Savage” and similar representations were only issued during the Revolutionary and Enlightenment period (Berkhofer 76). Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James A. Levernier describe the development of stereotypes according to “what individual European nations found it convenient to confirm” to serve their own purpose for their individual colony, also adapting images and ideas from folklore for example, “ranging from the ‘wild men’ of medieval legend, to the prelapsarian innocents of Montaigne’s *Essays*, to subhuman degenerates like Caliban [...] whose ancestry had diabolic origins” (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 54-55). As particularly relevant for the Dustan narrative, for New England Puritans Native Americans majorly act as evil forces or were considered as satanic creatures themselves (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 61). In general stereotypes in captivity narratives include descriptions of animalistic living habits and behavior, laziness of the men based on the work distribution that required women to do the farm work, sexual abnormalities, cannibalism, lacking morality in Native women and ignorance of child rearing, drunkenness, or cruelty (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 64-70).

<sup>15</sup> Mary Rowlandson is a famous example of such a denial as she explicitly addresses this in her narrative: “[...] yet not one of them offered the least imaginable miscarriage to me” (27). For a discussion of sexual encounters or sexual harassment of captives, see for example Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900* (1993), Merril D. Smith, ed., *Sex and Sexuality in Early America* (1998), or June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (1993).

American bodies. The portrayal of bodies and corporeal interaction is always navigated through social and cultural constructions in the textual production and the representation of bodily performances are shaped by a diversity of interests and agendas.

In the context of portrayed body depictions and performative acts, it is necessary to consider these as material and physical as well as metaphorical entities embedded in the narratives in terms of being the socio-cultural products of their time. David Hillman and Ulrika Maude claim that “the body has always been a contested site” and “the body can itself be ‘written’—marked and changed by ideological and socio-historical forces” (1-2). This can clearly be seen in Cotton Mather’s writing of Hannah Dustan’s captivity as a product of such forces. When bodies are depicted in such a text, the additional layers of mediation as well as their political and cultural contexts need to be considered and acknowledged.

Even if the former captive’s name is stated as the author or if the title seems to reveal its writer just as the title of Rachel Plummer’s narrative claims to be “Written by Herself,” the attribution of authorship and editorship is complex and mostly impossible to trace (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 10-13). The narratives’ productions and thus their portrayal of bodies were formed by a variety of influences: By their editors and their related agendas; by different motivations for their creation and publications as well as revisions and changes, for example serving as a documentation of the captivity for relatives or the mere need for money; by their marketability; or by the passing of time between the lived captivity and the actual writing process (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 16).<sup>16</sup> In short, captivity narratives are “text- and culture-based” and modern readers therefore need to retain a critical distance to “authenticity” when examining these diverse but often

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<sup>16</sup> The Preface of Mary Rowlandson’s narrative is an example of such an unsolved question. Although most scholars ascribe its authorship to Increase Mather, there has not been enough evidence to fully prove this claim. For a discussion of the preface-mystery, see for example Robert Diebold, “A Critical Edition of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson’s Captivity Narrative” (1972) Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, “The Publication, Promotion, and Distribution of Mary Rowlandson’s Indian Captivity Narrative in the Seventeenth Century” (1988), 239-61; or Bill J. Stratton, *Buried in Shades of Night* of 2013 (in particular chapter 4 “Fractured Histories, Captive Subjects: The Masque of Textual Effacement” 95- 121).

highly racist, sexist, and/or propagandistic texts and in particular their use and portrayal of bodies (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 13).

Hannah Dustan's captivity narrative is one of the most famous of its kind because of its acceptance into colonial New England literary history—although Dustan herself only turned to Puritanism in her sixties. Furthermore, its circulation and wide acceptance particularly in nineteenth-century US-American culture gives evidence of the story's continued broad impact (Humphreys 150-55).<sup>17</sup> When applying June Namias's categories of Indian captivity narrative's "gendered archetypes" of "the Survivor, the Amazon, and the Frail Flower" to what we learn about Hannah Dustan through the narrative voice of Cotton Mather, she clearly qualifies as the captive-type of "Amazon." Dustan not only survives her captivity by adapting to the situation and acknowledging the challenge of the captivity situation (for Namias Mary Rowlandson is the personified "Survivor") but literally takes her fate—and a tomahawk—into her own two hands (24-25).

Hannah Dustan was taken captive out of childbed along with her newborn infant and her midwife Mary Neff on March 15, 1697 in an Abenaki raid encouraged by French bounty offers for prisoners and scalps on Haverhill, Massachusetts during King William's War (Derounian-Stodola, *Women's* 55).<sup>18</sup> While her husband Thomas was able to escape the captors with their remaining seven children, several others of those assaulted were killed. The Abenakis also murdered Dustan's baby, "they dash'd out the Brains of the *Infant* against a Tree" and Dustan, Neff, and thirteen year old Samuel Lennardson—captured in Worcester a year earlier—were taken about 150 miles north towards Canada (Mather 138–40).

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<sup>17</sup> Although the impact of the Dustan captivity in the context of nineteenth-century culture cannot be part of this paper, it, nevertheless, needs to be mentioned that the narrative is not only prominent 'on paper' but also publicly 'written in stone' with three nineteenth-century Dustan monuments, among them a granite memorial at Boscawen, New Hampshire, and a statue of Dustan holding a tomahawk in Haverhill, Massachusetts (Baym et al. 343; Cutter 10-11). Dustan's narrative was integrated in a diversity of nineteenth-century productions, like paintings and in written texts from United States histories to children's books. Renowned authors like Nathaniel Hawthorne or Henry David Thoreau also included and interpreted Dustan-accounts in their writings (Cutter 14). Mount Dustan in New Hampshire was named after Hannah Dustan (Cutter 14).

<sup>18</sup> King William's War, 1688-1697, is also known as the Second Indian War.

The death of Dustan's baby fits what Laurel Thatcher Ulrich calls "the sucking infant theme," which can be seen as a stock element in captivity narratives (Ulrich 173). It draws attention to Native American violence and emphasizes their readiness to kill even the most innocent without empathy; as a consequence, the texts emphasize that nobody can be fully safe from the 'savages.' Their captors, a converted Catholic Indian family of twelve members, inform them that they would have to run the gauntlet once they reach the Indian town of their destination.<sup>19</sup> As a result Dustan convinces Neff and Lennardson to kill their captors, scalp them, and return with their pieces of physical evidence to Boston where they receive fifty pounds as a bounty for the scalps (Mather 142–43; Baym et al. 343–44; Toulouse 193).<sup>20</sup> The depiction and functionalization of bodies—Native American and non-Indian—are an essential element of North American Indian captivity narratives as the contextualization of Mather's narrative has shown. The depiction and referral to the threat of captivity to white female bodies in opposition to violent male Native bodies, for example, display how political, cultural, and social agendas are appropriated and translated into such accounts for the respective community of (implied) readers.

### **Transgressing the Dichotomy: The Corporeal Performance of Ambivalence**

Hannah Dustan's account presented by Mather cannot be merely characterized through a conventional polarized framework of 'good settlers versus bad Indians' since the narrative is more complicated than it seems at first glance: She is more than a woman-victor over lawless, murderous Native Americans. The whole narrative can be characterized as a portrayal of ambivalences performed through bodies. This reading builds upon Teresa A. Toulouse's comprehensive analysis called "Hannah Duston's Bodies: Domestic Violence and Colonial Male Identity in Cotton Mather's *Decennium Luctuosum*" (2001). Toulouse argues that Dustan's "aggressive

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<sup>19</sup> Although it is often portrayed as a form of punishment or torture for captives in the narratives, running the gauntlet was part of initiation rituals when the captives were intended to be adopted into the tribe. James Axtell describes this as "a purgative ceremony by which the bereaved Indians could exorcise their anger and anguish, and the captives could begin the cultural transformation" ("White Indians" 71).

<sup>20</sup> Despite Massachusetts Bay Colony's repeal of paying a bounty for Indian scalps in 1695, Hannah Dustan's husband Thomas successfully claimed and received a reward for the scalps as a compensation for Dustan's financial losses (Derounian-Stodola 55-56).

female body becomes a major sign of what has fragmented and threatened that social body” of New England and that “the murdered bodies of men, women, and children become specific sites of the colonial *male* failure to preserve that social body” (194). In these bodily depictions, she furthermore identifies certain wanted but also feared “aggressive fantasies about patriarchal Puritanism from within the Puritan elite” (194). I want to shift my focus now to Mather’s narrative of Hannah Dustan to trace these ambivalences through the specific portrayal of bodies and performative body acts.

Hannah Dustan’s body transgresses gender, race, and cultural boundaries in the narrative, and thereby achieves the quality of an ambivalent character. Rebecca Blaevins Ferry describes Dustan’s mobility between roles as crossing “cultural and gender expectations and deconstruct[ing] differences in the oppositions masculine/feminine and [Puritan] English/Indians” (33). These oppositions are performed and become visible through the representation of bodily acts and depictions of bodies in general right from the start. After the conventional beginning of an attack by and the destruction through the “savages,” the first introduction of the ‘heroine’ Hannah Dustan is through a description of her physical condition as “having lain in about a Week” in postpartum rest for about a week after giving birth to a daughter (Mather 138). Since this information is placed at the beginning of the narrative, it can also be read as a starting point for the creation of suspense considering the turn of her bodily strength later.

Furthermore, Dustan’s body is clearly gendered. Judith Butler claims that “the regulatory norms of ‘sex’ work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies, and more specifically, to materialize the body’s sex, to materialize sexual difference” (*Bodies* xii). Following this understanding, Mather’s portrayal of Dustan’s body and its performance clearly identifies her as female due to her reproductive capability, the delivered child, and her physical vulnerable and weakened condition at rest and still in need of her midwife.

With regard to a seventeenth-century conception of body and health, this stresses Dustan’s physical weakness even more because the notion of the unstable,

permeable, “porous and mutable” or humoral body was still dominant when Dustan’s narrative was written (Earle 41). In Galenic basic theory of the four elements, the corresponding humors and temperaments, the female body was generally seen as an inferior, ‘colder’ version of a man’s body.<sup>21</sup> This belief, however, continued after the humoral theories and the one-sex model of the body was replaced with a strict two-sex model around the beginning of the eighteenth century.<sup>22</sup> With the female body’s “unique ‘leakiness’” through “its production of urine, breast milk, and menstrual blood” it was generally considered less perfect than a male body (Brown 34). Dustan’s condition, in particular, was even more weakened and out of balance due to the humoral imbalance pregnancy produces. Following the Galenic understanding, Hannah Dustan’s body is particularly vulnerable to environmental influences in such a condition as is her infant daughter, who faces the threat of growing up in the ‘wilderness’ among the ‘savages’ and as a result of captivity might undergo “seasoning” and turn into an Indian (Chaplin, *Subject* 138; 151). At the time of the attack, Dustan and Neff are disrupted in the private, female space of childbirth where, as Marc Priewe states, “men were only peripheral figures,” which clearly did not include Abenaki warriors (150).<sup>23</sup> Although Dustan herself exerts physical violence later in the narrative, conventional gender roles are still “intact” at this point. It is Dustan’s husband Thomas who is described to “manfully” keep “at the Reer of his *Little Army* of Unarmed Children, while they

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<sup>21</sup> For an introduction to Galenic theory in early America, see for example chapter 2 “Invading America” of Joyce E. Chaplin’s *Subject Matter: The Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676* (2001); Chapter 1 “Mobile Pathogens, Traveling Knowledges” of Marc Priewe’s *Textualizing Illness: Medicine and Culture in New England 1620-1730* (2014); or Chapter 1 “Humoralism and the Colonial Body” in Rebecca Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race and the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492-1700* (2013). See Martha L. Finch, *Dissenting Bodies: Corporealities in Early New England* (2010) for an introduction into Calvinist perspectives on the body.

<sup>22</sup> Joyce E. Chaplin states that “Aristotelian texts taught that humans were composed of the four elements: earth, air, fire, and water; the bodily humors—black bile, blood, yellow bile, and phlegm—correlated with the elements. The Galenic tradition also related the elements to the humors and elaborated a theory of the qualities [...] and the faculties [...]. No one had a perfect balance among the four humors; [...] Life was possible only because of heat and moisture[...]. Heat also explained sexual difference: men were hotter than women, their bodies stronger and quicker; hence their capacity for politics, war, and heavy labor. Women were cooler, therefore weaker, less decisive, and better fitted for domestic task” (*Subject* 120-21).

<sup>23</sup> See the following sources for further details: Sorisio; Moore and Tarter, “Introduction” 4; Finch 14–17; Chaplin, “Natural” 14; Chaplin, *Subject* 267; Stabile 113.

Marched off, with the pace of a Child of Five years old,” protecting all of them and (not being able to choose a favorite child) determined “to Live and Dy with them all,” which also justifies why he is not available to save Dustan, Neff, and the baby (Mather 139). Dustan’s weakened, female bodily condition which allows her to bring her baby as another English settler body into life just days before the raid, identifies the Abenakis unmistakably as the ‘savage Other.’ They not only use violence against English bodies in general, but also disrespect and defile the intimate female ‘body space’ of birth and postpartum rest.

Shortly after they begin the march into the threatening ‘wilderness,’ the ‘savagery’ of the Natives is again emphasized as they kill Dustan’s infant and “bury their Hatchets in their [the other captives’] Brains, and leave their Carcasses on the Ground for Birds and Beasts to feed upon” (Mather 140). The practice harshly clashes with the Puritan custom of accompanying the deceased to the grave and burying them (Stannard 109). The challenges for Dustan and Neff are specified through the body because despite the “Hardships, of their *Travel*, their *Lodging*, [and] their *Diet*” they manage these unfamiliar and in the captives’ perception inferior living conditions “without any sensible Damage, in their Health” (Mather 140). However, as can be expected from a Puritan writing tradition, Mather emphasizes God, who graciously hears the “Sighs of these *Prisoners*” that have become helpless victims at the mercy of their captors (140).

By God’s providence, as he himself is the designer of the captives’ experiences according to Puritan understanding, the upcoming change in the circumstances for the captives is induced and the ambivalence of the narrative can be traced through the representation of Dustan’s and the Natives’ bodies. The captives have been handed over to “New Masters,” who do not represent the ‘savage,’ male warrior ‘Other,’ but an “*Indian Family* [of] Twelve Persons; Two Stout men, Three Women, and Seven Children” (140–41). Although the group includes two “Stout men,” the depiction of that Indian group as a family with a majority of children differs from their former captors, who are characterized by descriptive adjectives like “Raging Dragons” or “Salvages” (140). Yet, as Mather reports disapprovingly and with a

judging tone, they are not just a family but “*Idolaters*,” a converted, Catholic Indian family with strict praying rituals and requests to their captives to “Retire to their *English Prayers*” (141). The description of this practice creates suspense in the narrative because Mather includes direct speech from the captors, ironizing and questioning God’s power based on what they did to their captives.

The subsequent physical victory of the captives over the captors introduces the change of action in the plot: “*What need you Trouble your self? If your God will have you delivered, you shall be so! And it seems, our God would have it so to be*” (141). In the narrative the violent overthrow of the captors is presented as a reaction to the prospect of running the gauntlet, and it results in the murder of ten out of the twelve family members “in a *Dead Sleep*” (142). Ironically, those murdered were actually not involved in the killing of Dustan’s infant daughter. Mather prepares the subsequent murder scene by comparing Dustan’s position to Jael’s in the Old Testament, where “one of these Women, took up a Resolution, to Imitate the Action of *Jael upon Sisera*” (142).<sup>24</sup> This comparison justifies not only her individual revenge and defense but puts her violent act into the broader context of the greater good of New England, just like Jael killed the enemy to support the Israelites’ cause (Strong 127). The subsequent shift in the narrative can be explained through Dustan’s body moving from being an oppressed, passive victim to being the major aggressor and initiator of the murder. The use of Biblical typology through the comparison with the Old Testament’s Jael as a “Biblical forecast of current events” foreshadows and justifies the event of the murder (Elliott 34). Like Jael, Dustan destroys the enemy and empowers her body to prevail over the Indian bodies.

In his third-person narrative account, Mather continues to describe Dustan’s situation to introduce and interpret the murder and its proceedings: “being where she had not her own *Life* secured by any Law unto her, she thought she was not forbidden by *any Law* to take away the *Life* of the *Murderers*, by whom her Child had been Butchered. She heartened the Nurse and the Youth to assist her in this

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<sup>24</sup> In the *Book of Judges*, Jael convinces the Israelites’ enemy Sisera into her tent by faking hospitality and serving him lavishly. When he is asleep, Jael puts a tent nail in his temple (*Judges* 4:17-22); Humphreys 157).

Enterprize” (142). Although the Indian family did not kill Dustan’s baby, the three captives take hatchets, strike down the “*Sleeping Oppressors*,” among them six children, and—instead of an immediate escape—“cutting off the *Scalps* of the *Ten Wretches*” (143). Only one Indian woman, “sorely wounded” and “one Boy, whom they Reserved Asleep, indenting to bring him away with them” thus planning to take an Indian captive themselves, survive their attack (143).<sup>25</sup> With the scalping of her Indian victims, we can identify two levels of body performance acts in the narrative: on the one hand, it is the mere, physical violence, the blood-and-gore theme of the captives’ deed to revenge the murder of the baby and their being taken away from their regular life. Dustan acts, in Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s words, as a “deputy husband and defender,” and from a Puritan New England perspective her killing can be seen as a ‘heroic’ contribution to fight the ‘savages’ (Ulrich 195; Faery 33).<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, Dustan’s killings, as Ulrich and Toulouse argue, go beyond the depiction of a victorious New England body performing revenge against the enemy in a lawless space. Thatcher claims that “Dustan became a killer because the moral order around her had broken down” and she moves “into a vacuum created by war” to take over the duty of what “New England had been unable to do collectively” (169). For Toulouse, this “lawless” space is “the very source of law itself—the physical control of one body by another,” but at the same time it also accuses New England to create such a condition of destruction for both, Indians and settlers simultaneously (“Bodies” 204). In the narrative, Dustan passes through a rite-de-passage situation in which this “lawless” space can be read as, using Schechner’s adaptation of Victor Turner’s terminology, a liminal phase, when according “spaces, transitions, and transformations occur” and “persons are stripped of their former

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<sup>25</sup> The captives’ shared murder of the Indian family could also be seen as a “*communitas*” among Dustan, Neff, and Lennardson in a situation of “anti-structure” that frees them from their usual social status and behavior (Schechner 70).

<sup>26</sup> Concerning the topic of female scalping, James Axtell—unfortunately—very shortly comments: “Although scalping was considered a male occupation, women, even refined urban ladies, were not ignorant of or necessarily squeamish about it. The story of Hannah Dustin’s capture and escape with ten of her captors’ scalp, which gained in the telling, was a forceful reminder that the enemies of colonial men were the enemies of all English settlers [...]. Apparently, the sight of a bloody French scalp—or an Indian’s—at their satined feet would not have sent well-bred colonial girls into a faint or pious outrage. By the mid-eighteenth century, it seems safe to say, scalping was as Anglo-American as shillings and succotash” (*Newcomers* 273-74).

identities and positions in the social world” (Schechner 66). Thus her performance leaves a certain ambivalence within the text because she is provided with a her new identity as the Indian slayer revenging her loss and defending New England, but, at the same time, this transgression from passive victim to aggressor can be read as a symptom of Mather’s attack on New England’s weaknesses, which is responsible for producing such a transgression in the first place (Toulouse 204).

## Conclusion

Samuel Sewall’s diary entry of May 12, 1697 describes that after her return Hannah Dustan told him one of the Indian family’s men “showed the night before, to Samuel Lennardson, how he used to knock Englishmen on the head and take off their scalps” (344). In Mather’s narrative, Lennardson and Neff are only secondary characters and he emphasizes Dustan as the narrative’s protagonist. What is especially interesting about this diary entry is that it particularly points to scalping as an Indian method. The narrative states that they not only kill the Indian family but temporarily use attributed Indian warfare practices themselves by scalping their victims, which for Native Americans means much more than ‘just’ losing a life in warfare. As James Axtell claims, “[s]calps were not mere trophies or booty of war” for many tribes “[t]o lose that hair to an enemy was to lose control over one’s life, to become socially and spiritually ‘dead,’ whether biological death resulted or not” (*Newcomers* 262). Furthermore, the scalping of an enemy also represents the “transference of power and identity into the victor’s hands” (*Newcomers* 262). Accordingly, Dustan, Neff, and Lennardson kill their Native American captors twice: by taking their physical and their spiritual lives.

Initiating the attack, Dustan also likens herself and her body practice to male Native American Others. Hannah Dustan’s performative act transgresses not just ascribed gender roles by actively participating in the violence of murder but as “her behavior made her not only like an Indian, but, like Jael also like a man” (Faery 33). The dichotomies of assigned body roles are resolved: The captive becomes the captor, and the captor falls victim to the captive (Strong 128). It is Dustan’s body in particular that transgresses these oppositions of male/female and Indian/non-Indian

by merging the boundaries to render a denial of a clear body performance according to its cultural and social roles within the Puritan framework. The narrative closes with the report that they receive “*Fifty Pounds [...] as a Recompence of their Action; besides which they Received many presents of Congratulation*” and a reward from the governor of Maryland for their deeds (Mather 143). In a way the end seems to confirm the righteousness of her behavior by paying them respect. Nevertheless the ambivalence of her performance and her transgressive behavior is not clearly solved because the text does not offer an instructive comment.

In conclusion, Mather’s Hannah Dustan narrative has left the Puritan audience in a state of confusion due to its ambivalent presentation. It questions the performance particular of female bodies according to coded roles embedded in its ideological structures of Puritan New England. This discursive ambivalence becomes apparent when reading the narrative through the lens of the body since it serves as a projection screen for the socio-cultural beliefs of the time. Dustan’s character starts out as the stereotypical helpless, passive, white, female victim who is taken captive out of childbed, whose infant is killed in front of her eyes, and who can only sigh about her condition of confinement. Contemporary interpretations of health and body functions support this depiction of a weakened, female body that is taken out of recovery by the violent Indian Other. Believing to stand under God’s providence, Dustan’s performance changes and she initiates a murder and scalping of ten out of twelve sleeping Indians, which does not follow the gendered role of a colonial white woman. Her white, female body takes over the role of a male Indian warrior and turns the Indian family into the passive victim of “such Home Blows” (142). Mather even describes them as “Poor Prisoners,” which again supports the ambivalence in the narrative since the presupposed polarization of good and bad is obviously not applicable (143).

Due to Mather’s use of language, which does not allow for simple dichotomies and the unresolved performance of Hannah Dustan as victim, Indian slayer, and praised defender of New England goes beyond the stereotypical structure of the captivity formula. While Dustan’s narrative nevertheless fulfills these markers of a white

body, of villains, and of captivity, its ambivalence portrayed through the performative acts of the bodies emphasizes the importance of captivity narratives as a “map for reading the past” beyond its prefabricated frameworks (Tarter and Lindman 2).

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