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EURO-AMERICAN WOMEN RETURNED FROM CAPTIVITY WITH NATIVE AMERICANS BECOME AGENTS OF EMPIRE IN THE AMERICAN WEST (115 pp.)

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Amid the turmoil of the Reconstruction and Progressive Eras, increasing efforts to suppress Native American peoples, and the rapidly growing women's suffrage movement, the American West became a symbol of Euro-American imperial goals and an ethnocentrically based national identity. Both a locale of cultural confrontation and warfare, many questions have arisen over who participated in this story. Scholars have long questioned female agency in the West, and this work attempts to navigate how female self-published captivity narratives gave white women agency not only over their own lives but over those of the Native peoples they held responsible for their captivity. Chapter one works to re-examine earlier scholarship on women in the American West and how these individuals wanted to be perceived. The next chapter explores these women's depictions of savagery and reinforcement of popular ideas of how Native peoples should be handled. Finally, the last chapter explores women's active participation in American efforts at imperial expansion using the Indian Depredations Act. This study hopes to reveal how women leveraged their captivity experiences which condemned their Native American captors to gain some amount of independence and fame within their own lives.

FREEDOM THROUGH CAPTIVITY: WOMEN'S USE OF INDIAN CAPTIVTY NARRATIVES AS A GATEWAY TO INDEPENDENCE, 1865-1920

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Introduction

> History traces many wars to women; and women certainly bore a large though unconscious part in inciting our people to take up arms in attempts to rescue them, and to inflict such punishments upon their savage captors as would teach the Indians a needed lesson.
>
> -Elizabeth Custer,
> *Following the Guidon* (1890)[1]

In her reflections on white women's role in Euro-American and Native American interactions, Elizabeth Custer touches upon several issues that have also interest scholars of the American West. Native American captive taking brings up questions of trans-cultural interactions and clashes in a frontier environment while the mention of "savage captors" alludes to the formation of memory and myths about the American West, including the perpetuation of racialized stereotypes which were centered around Native peoples as a way of villainizing the "other." She also mentions the taking up of arms and inflicting punishment upon Native Americans, referring to Euro-American efforts at suppression, removal, assimilation, and, at times, genocide of Native peoples in an extensive history of wars between the two groups. Most importantly, however, Custer centers these events around white women.

Custer is certain women were unconscious or unwilling participants in this story, but recent efforts by historians to include a broader range of actors in their narratives, leads one to question whether white women in the American West unwilling participated or were active agents in this story of imperialism and suppression. Particularly, captivity narratives produced in the post-Civil War Trans-Mississippi West, allow for an examination of female agency; they

[1] Elizabeth Custer, *Following the Guidon* (New York, 1890), 2, quoted in Dee Brown, *The Gentle Tamers: Women of the Old Wild West* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1981), 19.

suggest that women, up through the suffrage movement, women both worked towards their own independence while simultaneously promoting the Euro-American imperial quest to seize Native American lands and administer Native societies through Federal Indian policy.

Although Custer focuses on women as catalysts to war with Native Americans, scholars of white and indigenous relations as well as women of the American West do not generally make this connection. One of the earliest scholars of the American West, Henry Nash Smith, excludes women almost entirely when focusing on myth creation and the Western settlement ideology. Of myths and symbols, Smith wrote they are works of "collective representations rather than the work of a single mind" and, rather than debunking them, scholars should work to show how myths "sometimes exert a decided influence on practical affairs." His evaluation of myth creation, while focused on the trope of the "virgin land," gives valuable perspective on studying popular imagery surrounding Native Americans as well as the images of Western women; the point of image studies is not to debunk them but to understand how they were wielded by and against certain populations. However, Nash's "collective representation" only appeared to refer to a certain set of Euro-American male figures, namely the farmer and politician. Women are referenced only in relation to fictional dime novels, making them a part of the fantasy of the American West rather than involved in the creation of that fantasy. Native Americans are almost entirely erased from Smith's history, and he rarely acknowledges how Euro-American settlers obtained the land. [1]

Smith's later contemporaries of American myth formation, Richard Slotkin and Robert F. Berkhofer did not disagree. Both scholars placed more emphasis on how Euro-American men used women as the constant victims of Native American's supposedly inherent violence and lust;

[1] Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), xi, 112.

women were a part of the creation of the "savage" myth but not through any acts of their own will. Slotkin, in his voluminous *Regeneration Through Violence* (1973), devoted a chapter to captivity narratives as some early literature which displayed these themes. Similarly, Berkhofer's *The White Man's Indian* (1978) extends the timeline to the late nineteenth century at which point, as seen in Smith's scholarship, Western women almost entirely assume the role of fictional characters in Wild West shows and dime novels. Neither scholar separates women and their captivity experience from fictional storytelling, and, although the trope of "pure white women" in the clutches of "savage" Native Americans was used in the formation of Euro-American national identity, these scholars do not see women as having an acting role.[2]

Soon after Slotkin and Berkhofer's publications, scholarship revolving around Western women saw a revival of scholarly interest resulting from second wave feminism of the 1970s. Historians like Patricia Y. Stallard in *Glittering Misery* (1978), make statements that women shared "life on a hostile frontier" with men, and, just like men, they "actively participated in the thankless chore of making the frontier safe for farmers and townsmen." In her discussion of military wives who followed the "Indian fighting Army," Stallard's slightly Turnerian sentiments certainly deviate from previous scholarship on Western women. Although she focuses specifically on miliary dependents- wives, children, and prostitutes- who "participated in the last great task of continental expansion- the pacification of the Western Indian tribes," Stallard's scholarship does not explain exactly how the women helped obtain this goal. Primarily, she

[2] Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973),3-24, 94-115; Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1978), 3-10, 25-32, 80-85.

focuses on female adaptability and devotion to their military husbands without connecting the women's actions to Native American suppression and removal.[3]

Stallard's work is far from comprehensive, a weakness which she readily admits, and she expresses the hope that her published master's thesis will spark more in-depth scholarship on women's various roles in this imperial story of nation building. For several years, this hope was realized with a series of rapid publications such as Julie Roy Jefferey's *Frontier Women* (1979), John Mack Farragher's *Men and Women on the Overland Trail* (1979), and Sandra L. Myres' *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience* (1982). However, none of these scholars go so far as to make a direct connection of Euro-American women in the suppression of Native Americans nor do they entirely agree that women possessed agency their own lives.[4]

While Faragher focuses on gender, his main interest was in showing how gender roles were perpetuated during the journey west and later became the norm for how men and women behaved once they began to create settlements. Studying both men and women's journals written while on the overland trail, Faragher concludes that "if we are to understand rural midwestern life we must first appreciate that this was a place and a time in which women played no part in public life." Women were relegated to the domestic sphere, and he argues that "cultural sanctions separating the spheres of masculine and feminine were so effective that women rarely tested them." Faragher does not address whether women necessarily wanted to test these limits, but it

[3] Patricia Y. Stallard, Stallard, Patricia Y. *Glittering Misery: Dependents of the Indian Fighting Army* (San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1978), vii-viii, 13.

[4] Stallard, *Glittering Misery*, viii. These disparities in the scholarship are especially puzzling given that many of these scholars drew on the same primary source bases, mainly extensive collections of women's journals and personal correspondences as well as publications about gender roles, newspapers on women in the West, and even some captivity narratives.

appears that he suggests women never even thought of questioning their position as gentle mother figures.[5]

Myres and Jefferey also conclude that women were reluctant to challenge gender norms which were often the only familiar things to women in an unfamiliar environment. While the introduction and concluding chapters of Myres' work suggests that the American West served as the origins of the Women's Suffrage movement, the larger bulk of her scholarship focuses on women's fear of their new environment and their concern for the "darker side of human nature which they found among their fellow pioneers," particularly Euro-American men who engaged in "rough talk and hard liquor." Her interpretation of women's journals suggests that women were deeply unhappy, lonely, and out of place. If women contributed to the "settlement" of the West, it was an attempt to recreate their lives back East. Jefferey came to much the same conclusion although her perspective on women's life in the American West is perhaps grimmer. Jefferey admits to having hopes of discovering a "feminist" story when embarking on her research, but she concludes that "pioneer women" did not use the "frontier as a means of liberating themselves from stereotypes and behaviors which I found constricting and sexist." Not only did women's position in society not improve, but they became slaves to their husbands and the exhausting labor it took to create a settlement. Although Jefferey's portrayal places women in

[5] John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 110-11. Elizabeth Jameson, in her 1987 collection which she edited with Susan Armitage, suggests that women's lack of public role was due less to the constraints of gender roles so much as women offered no economic benefits to their families. Jameson, however, also suggests that small changes to this dynamic began as both men and women were forced to swap labor during their time on the overland trail and, after settlement, as necessity forced women to become wage earners. See "Women as Workers, Women as Civilizers: True Womanhood in the American West," in *The Women's West*, ed. Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 150-151.

an active role of physically cultivating land, she concludes that it was not of women's own volition.[6]

Further, in relation to women's thoughts and actions towards Native Americans, Jefferey concludes that part of the burden which wore women down was the all-encompassing fear of Native American attacks. She claims that women were afraid of captivity due to the belief that Native men possessed a "lust for white women's bodies." Further, "pioneer women were unsympathetic to the clash between cultures and unaware that white behavior often provoked the Indian behavior they disliked so much." Myres similarly portrays women existing in a heightened state of dread of contact with Native Americans, relaying stories of women using tent poles to scare off Natives Americans who came too close before bursting into tears once the perceived danger had passed. Unlike Jefferey, however, Myres suggests that frontier women did not completely condemn their indigenous neighbors, with most women relaying their stories of raids and captivity in a fair and "factual manner." Further, Myres suggests that most seemed aware of what provoked Native American attacks on white settlements.[7]

Perhaps because his study of Western women focuses primarily on individual "great women" who deviated from gendered norms, Dee Brown portrays women as freer than some other scholars. Although his scholarship was published much earlier than works of the1970s era here being discussed, the themes which Brown's leans on are the same and should be discussed together. He opens *The Gentle Tamers* (1958) by making the statement that Western women

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[6] Sandra L. Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience 1800-1915* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 12-36; Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West 1840-1880* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), xvi, 25-50. Jefferey also includes an analysis of how women protested their husband's making them move west, some of which involved sabotaging their own food stores and supplies.

[7] Jefferey, *Frontier Women,* 46-47, 55; Myres, *Westering Women*, 61. Myres also suggests that these women mostly saw Native peoples as a part of the overall scenery and not so much as human beings. The danger, other than sexual, was no greater, in their perception, than if a wild animal had wondered onto their new settlement or camp.

cannot easily be defined by one image, writing that "whatever her dress, she had endurance, she had courage, sometimes she was wilder than the land she tamed." His work encompasses literature from female missionaries, actresses, women who disguised themselves as men, mail order brides, and prostitutes as well as the "gentle" wives whom his later contemporaries primarily focus on. Brown's vision of female agency is limited, however. Although claiming women found freedom in the migration, he concludes that women's writing reveals that they sought God's protection and guidance in all things, reverting women's roles back to Colonial Era motherhood and Godliness.[8]

The interactions of Euro-American females and Native Americans, Brown concludes, were shaped by women's awareness of their own vulnerability as well as fascination with an exotic culture. He agrees with Myres and Jefferey's suggestions that women existed in a heightened state of fear, especially of contracting new diseases as well as "Indian captivity." One notable case study which Brown includes is the captivity of Josephine Meeker and the events surrounding the White River Massacre (1879). This study is used to show the perceived dangers which women faced in migration west; Brown shows the potential impact Native American interactions could have had on women but not how women could influence these situations.[9]

The cannon of scholarship on women in the American West has largely been neglected since the 1980s with only a recent renewal of interest with scholars like Margaret D. Jacobs and

[8] Brown, *The Gentle Tamers*, 2-4, 30. Although still a valuable piece of scholarship, Brown's effort to memorialize a few strong women in the American West makes it difficult to understand where he stands on female agency. His title and analysis suggest that women only helped establish a domestic sphere in the West, but his spotlighting of rebellious females also puts forward the notion that women were eager to cast off gender norms and hoped for more independence.

[9] Brown, *The Gentle Tamers*, 8-9, 93-94. In more recent scholarship, Anne E. Hyde also connects Indian captivity and disease as "primal fears" of Euro-American settlers. In her examination of it, however, she contrasts the two fears by dismissing captivity as fiction and disease a very real threat to imperial efforts at settlement. See *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011), 330-332.

Laurel Clark Shire who attempt to resolve what they perceive as the failings of scholars previously discussed. Shire attempts to trace female agency in frontier situations, and, in *The Threshold of Manifest Destiny* (2016), she focuses on earlier events during the settlement of Florida and changing Euro-American gender dynamics during and after the Florida Indian Wars. Studying women's response to indigenous raids, through authorship of Indian Depredations Narratives and the creation of the Indian Depredations Act (1796), she expresses the belief that women's presence, even when forced, in any frontier situation is indicative of the value men placed on women; they were perceived as central in the creation of new domestic spheres. Shire concludes that it has been wrong for scholars to dismiss female agency in Native American and Euro-American frontier relations simply because women did not migrate of their own free will, and she suggests that, though difficult to trace female agency within a patriarchal society, scholars must try to do so if understanding of frontier situations is to advance.[10]

Jacobs agrees with Shire's criticism of the narrow perspective which previous scholars have applied to the study of Western women and further argues that females gained autonomy at the cost of indigenous groups which Euro-American society sought to oppress. In her comparative study on white women's participation in indigenous child removal in the American West and Australia, Jacobs writes that "failure to examine white women as more than hearty pioneers, innocent bystanders to colonial conquest, has left the field of western women's history in a Turnerian rut." Instead, Jacobs argues that the field will benefit from an "emphasis on white women as agents of colonial control in the American West." Jacobs directly challenges these older images of Euro-American Western women and suggests scholars look past the standard

[10] Laurel Clark Shire, *The Threshold of Manifest Destiny: Gender and National Expansion in Florida* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 16. The Indian Depredations Act will be further discussed in context of captivity narratives and female agency in the third chapter.

sourcing of women's journals and letters as well as exploring different demographics than the frontier wife.[11]

Jacobs is also more definitive than Shire in assigning female agency. She concludes that "white women, primarily as reformers, but also as teachers and administrators, were integrally involved in promoting, carrying out, and sometimes challenging the removal of American Indian children to boarding schools." Jacobs also puts forward the notion that women in the American West not only filled positions which furthered Indian Removal policies, but they also challenged it, which suggests that frontier women were vocal and critical rather than passive and ill-informed. She further claims these women also "contributed to the racialized and gendered representation of Indian peoples that made such policies possible." Not only does this new scholarship promote females as active in the physical suppression throughout removal of indigenous groups, but it suggests that Western women, through words and writing, had a lasting impact on the racialized imagery of Native American peoples. Both Shire and Jacobs similarly conclude that women's reward for their participation was greater independence as Euro-American society began re-examining the value of women.[12]

The implication that scholars of Western women need to expand their source base and notions of female agency within Euro-American treatment of Native Americans brings forward the potential and largely untapped source base of women's self-published captivity narratives. The latter half of the nineteenth century, with the end of the American Civil War, was characterized by a push towards Western migration, bringing about a revival of the captivity

[11] Margaret D. Jacobs, "Maternal Colonialism: White Women and Indigenous Child Removal in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940" *Western Historical Quarterly 36* (2005), 455. This article was later developed into a complete monograph. See *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).
[12] Jacobs, "Maternal Colonialism," 453-454.

narrative genre. This era within the genre's history, from 1865 to 1920, is often dismissed by literary scholars. Michelle Burnham, in *Captivity and Sentiment* (1997), calls it a "degenerative genre" and concludes that it had become corrupted by the late eighteenth century at which point authors began leaning on tropes and pure fiction to sell copies. Gordon M. Sayre traces the evolution of the genre from "simple, direct religious documents" to "rank sensationalism and fiction appropriations of the nineteenth century."[13]

June Namias and Molly K. Varley, however, bring hope to the study of these later narratives. In her expansive 1993 study, White Captives, Namias argues that the value of studying captivity narratives rests in the variety of details which they can provide and less so about how much can be proven as fact. The narratives which can be easily corroborated with other primary sources of course can be better analyzed for their accuracy, but, for the narratives which "our ability to corroborate history is hopelessly clouded by folklore, exaggeration, and a lack of testimony from their Indian captors," can be examined for how they reveal the Euro-American struggles with cultural and gender identities while immersed in a foreign environment. Namias puts forward the notion that, if these sources are studied with the knowledge of their failings, they can still be of value in understanding not only Euro-American sentiments of ethnocentrism, nationalism, and imperialism but, as in female authored narratives, shifting notions of gender.[14]

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[13] Smith, *Virgin Land*, 174, 185; *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), 4-5; Gordon M. Sayre, ed. Introduction to *American Captivity Narratives* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 17. Historians have largely dismissed the later narratives as well. Hyde, by this time in the American West, does not even consider that being taken captive was a reality and dismisses the genre as complete fiction. Brown, although validating the possibility of Indian captivity, does not use Josephine Meeker's narrative as a source nor does he seem to believe there was much merit in studying others either, citing examples of women who claimed captivity experience to gain notoriety or further their careers.

[14] *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 8-11. Despite her sentiments on validity and value of all narratives, Namias only focuses on earlier narratives from interactions with Northern and Southeastern tribes. She does however include a catalogue of all

Varley is even more emphatic about the value of captivity narratives in relation to what they reveal about American identity construction as well as gender relations. Her study, *Americans Recaptured* (2014), focuses on Progressive Era narratives and the commemoration of these narratives with monuments. Varley contradicts Sayre and Burnham, claiming that, while captivity narratives do evolve over time, Progressive Era publications were defined by "ethnographic accuracy and historical detail." Narratives and monuments became increasingly popular from 1890 to 1920, Varley argues, because they served as testimony that Euro-Americans' "violent national development had been just, that their individual suffering had been nationally heroic" and, "that these people who actively remembered captives served as the vital link between the frontier past and the modern future." Although examining both male and female narratives, Varley emphasizes women in captivity and argues for the emergence of a new public image of womanhood as a direct result of narrative publication. The idea of the "Manly Mother" is defined as "traumatized by her captivity experience but also used the distinctively male trait of independent thought and action to survive her captivity and often better her post-captivity life."[15]

Though she alludes to women's masculine behavior continuing after captivity, Varley does not trace exactly how. Further, she excludes narratives from the far West, Rocky Mountains, and Southwest as well as any not written by settlers of English descent. In the context of Progressive Era nationalism, she argues that these narratives were either too recent for the public to identify with or did not fit the popular notion of what it was to be American. This

known captivities and narratives published about them- both self-authored and not- which begins in 1607 with John Smith and extends to Josephine Meeker in 1879. See "Appendix: Guide to Captives," 275-80.

[15] Molly, K. Varley, *Americans Recaptured: Progressive Era Memory of Frontier Captivity* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 4-8, 20-21, 129-69. She relies heavily on Richard Slotkin, Richard White, and Philip Deloria for her theories of the necessity of violence to the process of American identity creation. See Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence*, White's *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (*Cambridge, CT: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Deloria's *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

excludes some of the larger captivities, such as the previously mentioned Meeker captivity which did garner much public attention, and often does not make connections to suppression of Native Americans other than the distinction of "savagery" which is characteristic of the genre.[16]

In a similar study of the intentions of captivity narratives, Cathy Rex studies a female authored narrative based off the true captivity story of Maria Kittle. Rex claims that all captivity narratives are "inherently political" and female authored ones, be they written by the actual captive or another woman, are especially so due to the "distinctly gendered degradations and violence" which women faced during captivity. In her 2013 case study of Ann Eliza Bleecker's *The History of Maria Kittle*, Rex argues that texts like Bleecker's sought to "discipline, dominate, and restructure the uncolonized inhabitants of the New World by deploying the racial, cultural, and gendered infrastructures of the colonizers." More than simply texts which reinforce colonial themes and popular sentiment, she also suggests that these narratives were "intuitively connected to the process of nation building and the construction of a nation's identity." In this way, female captivity and authorship was a form of active participation in these trans-cultural interactions.[17]

Further, Rex argues women wrote feminism into the national conversation and even identity. Female authors, relying on "savagery," were able to create a narrative that not only featured "the experiences of White women but also the failures of White men during moments of historical, national crises." Her notions of female captivity narratives as components of nation building and feminism are corroborated by Namias and Varley who conclude that female captives focused public interest on gender roles and particularly assisted in emphasizing women

[16] Varley, *Americans Recaptured*, 15. The narratives studied in Varley's work are generally not self-published, and she seems to equate both factual and fictionalized narratives as one and the same.
[17] Cathy Rex, "Revisiting the Nation: The Domesticated Nationalism of Ann Eliza Bleecker's *The History of Maria Kittle*," *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal 42*, no.8 (2013): 956-59.

as central to idea of American identity. Namias in particular writes that female captivity "depicts a woman out of place, surviving in a world not of her own making," which "posed alternative solutions to race war and might offer alternatives to the status quo between cultures, and between sexes."[18]

Given the work of more recent scholarship on women in the American West which encourages a broader perspective on female agency, particularly in Euro-American suppression of Native peoples, and the suggestions literary scholars who propose the value of studying female authored captivities narratives, this project proposes to examine females who self-published their narratives from 1865 to 1920. This project looks to extend the study of captivity narratives beyond the scope of previous scholars like Varley, Namias, and Rex to instead focus on narratives which were authored solely by the female captives who were taken west of the Mississippi River. Similarly, this project will examine post-captivity life, making the connections between female agency and Native American suppression which other scholars have alluded to but not fully explored. The unique political and social environment of the Reconstruction and Progressive Eras as well as renewed Federal efforts at both indigenous removal and assimilation during this period allow for an examination of women's goals in writing about their experiences as well as the rationale behind their actions following their release from captivity.

Captivity narratives, as a genre and primary source base have a very loose description. Many scholars focus on captivities which lasted a longer time, or which were widely known to the public, though this is not always true as some popular narratives depict captivities which only lasted a couple hours. For the purposes of this project, longer narratives which were published

[18] Rex, "Revising the Nation," 958-59; Namias, *White Captives*, 10-12, 263-267. Hyde also largely agrees with the sentiment that female authorship, excepting captivity narratives, served its own role in nation building and re-arranging the gendered dynamics of the domestic sphere during a time of political uncertainty. See, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 4-6, 18-22

from 1865 to 1920 and sold multiple editions will be explored. Further, interviews found in both national and local newspapers published within this same time frame will also be used to explore some of the most widely known narratives which may not have resulted in a self-published work by the captive woman. As self-published narratives and interviews only tell the women's perspective, newspaper reports about these women, both their actions in captivity, lives after, and memorialization, will be used to understand public reception of these women and gain further understanding of their lives after captivity. To compliment these, Congressional documents such as petitions for reparations, testimonies by and about captive women, and personal bills issued to these women will also be used to understand their life after captivity and the larger question of their role in empire building and Native American suppression.

The first chapter works to understand women's portrayal of themselves during captivity and the public reception in newspapers and testimonies of women's actions which reveals a movement towards re-examination of Euro-American values of women. Following women's self-portrayals, the second chapter focuses on the trope of the "savage myth," how later narratives evolved earlier Colonial Era tropes to fit the popular sentiments during the time in which they were writing, and women's purpose in heavily condemning their Native American captors. Finally, the third chapter moves past women's written word and follows their actions, particularly in petitioning for reparations for their experience and how these actions allowed women to both increase their financial independence while furthering Federal efforts at indigenous suppression.

Re-examining the Cult of Womanhood

In the summer of 1864, Fanny Kelly, her husband, and their adopted daughter embarked on a journey west to Idaho seeking a better climate for her husband's poor health. Among those travelling on the packed emigrant trails, Kelly was "surprised to see so many women" and even more so at "how easily they adapted themselves to the hardships experienced in a journey across the plains." Kelly wrote that they even had plenty of "amusements and leisure time" with noon and evening hours of rest which were "spent in preparing our frugal needs, gathering flowers with our children, picking berries, hunting curiosities, or gazing in rapt wonder and admiration at the beauties of this strange, bewildering land." Despite the hardships which Kelly perceived to be part of the journey west, her depiction of women's experience on the trail was one of ease and adventure.[1]

Women in the American West have been assigned several different stereotypes by scholars, most of which directly contradict Kelly's depiction of women, their activities, and their relationship with the landscape and the indigenous peoples who inhabited it. Until 1859, women represented a large minority of the Euro-American population in the West with scholars like Dee Brown, in *The Gentle Tamers* (1958), speculating that there were only five women out of one thousand people living in larger cities like Denver, Colorado. Following the end of the American Civil War in 1865, Henry Nash Smith suggest there was a "surge of westward advance." The push for this came from residents of Eastern cities who believed in both the dream of an "agrarian utopia in the West" as well as the notion that settlement of the West would help

[1] Fanny Kelly, *My Captivity: A Pioneer Woman's Story of her Life Among the Sioux* (Toronto: Maclear, 1872), 13, 16.

preserve the Union in the future. With this idealistic fervor, Brown also notes a marked increase in the number of women making the trans-Mississippi journey. As their presence increased in the West, these women undoubtably played a role in what is often referred to as the "settlement of the West" and the subsequent suppression of Native American peoples.[1]

Women who wrote their own narratives used them as opportunities to cast off the gendered roles that characterized women as helpless victims of circumstance, their husband's will, and the "savage" nature of their indigenous captors. Through relating their behavior during their time in captivity, women made themselves the heroes of their own stories while also working against popular beliefs about femininity. While the impact their narratives and testimonies had on social constructs surrounding womanhood and gender roles may have been small, a trend towards public re-examination of their value in Euro-American society became visible. This can be seen in the way publications, such as newspapers and witness testimonies, as well as commemorative public works characterize these women.[2]

Scholars from the 1970s and 80s often suggested that women had no role in public life nor agency over their own lives. Further, the only impact women had was solely within the domestic realm of homemaking or the domestic side of community building as Sandra L. Myres suggests. Similarly, John Mack Faragher concludes that women had very little power within their

[1] Dee Brown, *The Gentle Tamers: Women of the Old Wild West* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1958), 6; Henry Nash Smith, Smith, Henry Nash. *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 174, 185. Smith's scholarship largely focused on white men and relation to the land. His discussion of the "conquest of the wilderness" relates to agricultural efforts and almost entirely leaves out Native Americans and confines women to fictional characters in dime novels. While there are limits to his research, his understanding of why Euro-Americans pushed for settlement of the West is still valuable.

[2] Patricia Y. Stallard similarly addresses female adaptability within the context of military dependents and the expectation that, no matter if a wife was previously a socialite or working class, the expectation for them was that they would "make life work" and "seek fulfillment being good army wives." Many found this difficult and, disillusioned, returned East. See *Glittering Misery: Dependents of the Indian Fighting Army* (San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1978), 12-13.

own familial units, which coincides with Julie Roy Jefferey's portrayal of the disheartened Western woman who was a slave to her husband and labor. Most of these early scholars also believed that women had almost no say in the move west; Faragher wrote that women were not called upon to make critical decisions for the family but were expected to react only with acquiescence and adaptation.[3]

Once on the trail, however, emergency situations challenged these carefully constructed gender roles. Faragher claims men still refused to take on "feminine" tasks, even if their wives were sick. However, even ill, women were expected to perform all their "female" domestic tasks as well as take on more masculine duties if need be. The adoption of male tasks extended to leadership roles: should there be danger, women were expected to be able to "overcome" their fears and "become masculine" for a short time. These moments of "masculinity" were temporary and approached with reluctance by the woman who had no desire to cross the lines of acceptable behavior.[4]

Despite Faragher and his contemporaries' assertions that gender roles remained the same during the settlement of the West as they had been back East, this example of women taking on perceived masculine roles reveals that gender dynamics were in fact impacted by migration. Other scholars, such as Joanne J. Meyerowitz, also suggest that movement west began altering gender roles. *Women Adrift* (1988) focuses on independent wage-earning women in Chicago from 1880 to 1930 and similarly concludes that the migration west and economic instability upon

[3] Sandra L. Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience 1800-1915* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 12-36; John Mack Faragher, *Women & Men on the Overland Trail*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 75; Julie Roy Jefferey, *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West 1840-1880* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), xvi, 25-50.

[4] Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail,* 83, 89-92. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich similarly writes on gender roles in New England. This later work outlines women's lives long before the journey west and reinforces Faragher's notion that women were frequently expected to bear the double burden of their own domestic duties as well as some of their husband's. See *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

arrival sparked shifts in female gender roles. She termed this phenomenon, which spanned generational, geographic, social, and economic groups of women, the "de-feminication" of the West. Meyerowitz wrote that wage-earning women "patched together choice and compulsion, self-expression and necessity, the open stride of freedom and the pinch of circumstance." The women of the emerging American West confronted both a "new set of possibilities" and a "new set of material and ideological constraints." Although Meyerowitz concludes that the freedoms which women were able to carve out for themselves were often limited and short-lived, her portrayal reveals that women in an uncertain environment actively sought new financial opportunities.[5]

Meyerowitz also suggests that public perception of wage-earning women was not favorable, and a large portion of the public did not see women in the labor force as "socially valuable." She writes of women being paid intentionally less as women were only supposed to have jobs to support their husbands. Society saw economically independent females as "women adrift" and were only acceptable as a necessity of the times but in no way embraced nor encouraged as the future of womanhood. Meyerowitz observes that popular literature still "elevated helplessness to a virtue and obscured, even obstructed, the actions that self-supporting women took on their own behalf." She suggests this rhetoric aimed to stem the tide of young women leaving rural settlements in the West and migrating to big cities for work though she does not go into the discussion the implications of this trend.[6]

Anne E. Hyde similarly works to prove that the nineteenth century West changed family dynamics and that women were shaped and shaped by these "unfamiliar times and places." Of

[5] Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), xvii-xviii, 9; Catharine R. Stimpson, introduction to *Women Adrift*, xvi.
[6] Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*, 33, 68.

personal accounts from 1800 to 1860, Hyde concludes that "the people living and writing in these new worlds sometimes defined themselves in ways that are puzzling to us now." She suggests that the study of how people wrote about themselves at that time in history will reveal how gender roles specifically shifted. An example of this can be found in Ann Eliza Bleecker's semi-fictional captivity narrative, *The History of Maria Kittle* (1793). Cathy Rex suggests that Bleecker's goal in writing this work was to speak on notions of gender as her characterizations juxtaposed "men's behavior with Indianness and female boldness." Using a captivity narrative allowed Bleecker to get her political messages published as she relied heavily on the "savage bodies and violent incursions into the civilized realm of White domesticity" to "allow for and even excuse the non-traditional, disorderly behavior of her characters." The disorder of her character's behavior perhaps reflected the disordered society in which Bleecker was writing and, Rex believes, allowed her to "posit an alternative gender vision, one that revises and revalues White women."[7]

Unlike Faragher, Meyerowitz, Hyde, and Rex conclude that Euro-American women took advantage of their new and uncertain circumstances to seek changes in the social norm. Further, Hyde and Rex suggest that literature reflected these shifts with the promotion of female action and even assumption of masculine characteristics. Although these scholars disagree on the extent to which migration and settlement in the West changed emigrants' values and social practices, they all suggest one similar thing: the overland journey and the effort it took to create a home in the what was seen as a hostile and uncertain social and political environment began to shape Euro-American gender roles and perceptions of women. As can be seen in Rex's case study,

[7] Anne E. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011), 4-22; Cathy Rex, "Revisiting the Nation: The Domesticated Nationalism of Ann Eliza Bleecker's *The History of Maria Kittle*," *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal 42*, no.8 (2013): 957-59, 967-68.

authors of captivity narratives were taking advantage of this circumstance to weave new notions of femininity into their narratives, a trend which remains and perhaps becomes more visible in the late nineteenth century narratives.

"Self-written" captive women from 1865 to 1920 worked diligently to prove their bravery, intelligence, and strength during captivity to their audiences. Their interactions with indigenous captors and reactions to extreme violence certainly helped to solidify some of the racial and gendered misconceptions about Native Americans, a topic of discussion for the next chapter. These instances, however, served the additional purpose of showcasing white women's physical and intellectual ability. Through their experiences, these women may have hoped to elevate their own value in the public mind and speak on white gender norms, knowing that their actions would be considered acceptable because of the hardships they endured.[8]

One of the times which women wrote most of their own bravery was during the initial attack during which they often witnessed the deaths of family members as well as friends and ultimately found themselves taken captive. Women frequently characterized themselves and other females as the most calm and rational in these moments, even sometimes over their male relatives or spouses. Abbie Gardner Sharp, in both an 1884 interview with the *Omaha Daily Bee* and her own narrative, *The History of the Spirit Lake Massacre* (1885), gave several examples of this. When first notified that there was a band of Sioux raiding nearby settlements, Sharp recalled one of her sister's, Mrs. Luce, had "more courage than mother or else felt more confidence" and

[8] Molly K. Varley suggests that the public approval and even veneration of women as the "Manly Mother" appeared during the Progressive Era. She argues that, at the turn of the century, women were remembered as the true pioneers over men, and Abbie Gardner Sharp, who will be discussed extensively throughout this paper, was the prime example of this character type. See *Americans Recaptured: Progressive Era Memory of Frontier Captivity* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 129-69.

declared that running was pointless. Luce "proposed to stand her ground, at least until after dinner, for if she was to be killed she did not want to die hungry." Later, when the raiding Sioux band arrived, Sharp's father moved for his gun, but was stopped by his wife who insisted that they should not fire first because, if death did come, they should die innocent of murder. However, as soon as Sharp's father was shot and killed, her mother immediately took up the gun herself and began firing back upon their attackers.[9]

Sharp's mother was not the only woman to pick up a weapon and fight back against Native American attackers. After her capture, Sharp was dragged along for some time while her captors raided several other settlements, including Springfield, Iowa where her other sister lived. When the men were afraid to fire upon the Sioux for fear of being hit themselves, Sharp's sister took up the task of loading the weapons and a Miss Church began shooting back, later boasting of having hit her mark several times. Sharp wrote that "those who had less courage" prayed. While not outright condemning the men who refused to shoot, Sharp wrote them into the role which women would have typically been portrayed during such a situation.[10]

Eventually the people of Springfield were forced to flee. Several men in the party were unable to go on and were left behind. Sharp however mentioned a Miss Swanger who, having been shot while fighting, walked for several days with a bleeding wound rather than risk capture

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[9] Abbie Gardner Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre and Captivity of Miss Abbie Gardner*, 4th ed. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa Printing Co., 1902), 28; "Mrs. Abbie Gardner Sharp: A Thrilling Story of Her Indian Captivity in the Spirit Lake Massacre in 1857," *Omaha Daily Bee (Omaha, NE), Nov. 19, 1884.* Sharp also told the reporter that she remained perfectly calm during the entire attack. Her narrative detailed the brutal deaths of family members, including that of her infant nephew who was pulled from her arms and beaten to death. It was her lack of reaction to the violence that Sharp believed the Sioux did not kill her. However, she wrote about it being a situation of shock than bravery. Newspaper articles changed the story and made it seem Sharp had the foresight to show the Sioux no fear so they would spare her life.

[10] Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*, 97. In Gina M. Martino's *Women at War*, she suggests that female combatants in borderland environments were not necessarily uncommon. Like Margaret Jacobs and Laurel Clark Shire, Martino speaks to the larger issue of women being relegated to footnotes or directly referenced as outlier or "curiosities." For more on militant women, see *Women at War in the Borderlands of the Early American Northeast* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

or death at the hands of the Sioux. Of Swanger's ordeal, Sharp wrote "a case of equal suffering, and equal endurance, is seldom found on record." In both these scenes of initial attack, Sharp revealed that women refused to cower, refused to pray when they could act, and even showed more physical endurance while wounded than the male members of the parties.[11]

In Fanny Kelly's 1872 narrative, the female characters similarly faced danger with humor and rationality. She wrote that the summer of 1864 was a "period of unusual peril to the daring pioneers seeking homes in the far West," and cited several incidents that had occurred which had caused resentment among the Native Americans for the "chastisements" of the U.S. military. A survivor of one of these attacks was taken to Deer Creek Fort where an officer's ball was being held. Despite having just narrowly escaped death, the woman borrowed a dress and participated in the festivities. Kelly wrote that, having constant "contact with danger, and familiarity with death," made women on the frontier more adaptable. They could face Native American attackers bravely one moment and put on a dress and be a lady the next.[12]

This female duality and adaptability are visible in the scene of attack on Kelly's own train. Having just passed Fort Laramie and received assurances that the tribes in the area were all friendly towards whites, Kelly's party was surprised to find themselves suddenly surrounded by about two hundred armed Ogalalla Sioux who approached their wagon train under the guise of asking for food. Kelly's husband initially reached for his gun, hoping to fire first and scare them off. Alarmed, Kelly stopped him "with all the power I could command, I entreated him to forbear

[11] Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*, 110-111.

[12] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 5, 36. In an examination of military wives travelling with the "Indian-fighting Army," Patricia Y. Stallard attempted to open the conversation on female dependents in the American West. Kelly's example of a women, fresh from a violent altercation with Native Americans, dressing up and participating in a military ball, relates well to Stallard's argument that soldiers and their wives "shared life on a hostile frontier" and both "actively participated in the thankless chore of making the frontier safe for farmers and townsmen." Although Stallard does not fully draw out how active women were, her argument relied on women "making it work" in supporting the military and furthering their husbands any way they could. See *Glittering Misery: Dependents of the Indian Fighting Army* (San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1978), vii-viii, 13.

and only attempt conciliation." She claimed to have known that, had her husband impulsively fired first, all the members of their band would die. It was her love for her fellow travelers that made her "strong to protest anything that would lessen our chance for escape."[13]

As members of the Ogalalla began to become bolder and rummaged through wagons and supplies, Kelly wrote that she was the only one who tried to be friendly and dared joking with the men. She wrote that she "in a careless manner, said they must give me some moccasins for some articles of clothing that I had just handed them, and very pleasantly a young Indian gave me a nice pair." Her reward for boldness was a fair trade on goods taken from her rather than just having them stolen like everyone else's belongings. When the attack did eventually commence, Kelly lost her humor but maintained her calm as she knew showing fear would cost the lives of herself and the other female travelers which included her young, adopted daughter. Even after being captured and not knowing whether her husband had been able to escape or had been killed, Kelly kept her calm, telling her companion, Mrs. Larimer that she hoped the men did get away so they could organize a rescue party for them rather than being held captive as well.[14]

Female criticism of white male failings is not an unusual theme in women's writing both during the overland journey and in instances of Indian captivity. Jefferey devotes much of her examination of women's journals to their unhappiness with their husbands' decisions and to their small if not unsuccessful protests such as unstopping the cork in a casket of alcohol to prevent a husband from drinking while steering the wagon. Similarly, Brown mentions that women often criticized their husbands for being duped by Native American traders or paying excessive fees

[13] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 21.

[14] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 23, 26, 37-38. Kelly condemned the other woman's panic, especially when the Sioux burned the rest of the supplies after the attack. She noted the other woman's distress "seemed to have reached its climax when she saw the Indians destroying her property." Larimer escaped captivity with her son shortly after, but, whenever she was mentioned in the narrative, Kelly appears to have used her variously as an example of female strength as well as of weakness.

for safe passage through territories. Rex even suggests that captive women specifically used their narratives to detail the "failures of White men during moments of historical, national crises" by giving men a "distinctly feminine voice."[15]

Some of the women during this later period obviously took advantage of the opportunity, as seen above in their questioning of male authority or their taking up of weapons when men would not. Others went so far as to use Native American society to suggest reforms to Euro-American habits. The most notable example of this is Fanny Kelly's observation on Sioux women and pregnancy. She noted how active Ogalalla women were throughout pregnancy, especially in their habit of swimming in rivers. Kelly concluded that exercise, rather than the "confinement" practiced by Euro-Americans, served as a "means of imparting strength and vigor to the constitution," which explained why, despite largely giving birth in isolation, Native women died less frequently during childbirth. While women generally worked to condemn Native American society, there are a few instances, such as this one, where "exposure to alternative cultural paradigms, allowed captive women to suggest changes to their own cultural practices."[16]

In other cases, where men were not present at the time of attack, women emphasized their independence. Josephine Meeker, her mother Arivella Meeker, and Sophrina Price, a woman who was married to a man working on the White River Reservation in Greeley, Colorado in 1879, became some of the most famous captive women and most known for their accounts of their own bravery. In the introduction to Josephine Meeker's narrative, *The Ute Massacre*, she wrote of herself in third person declaring that she was "the handsome young woman, who by her indomitable heroism and determination had saved the lives of the whole party." This statement

[15] Jefferey, *Frontier Women*, 25-30; Brown, *The Gentle Tamers*, 93-95; Rex, "Revising the Nation," 959.
[16] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 180; Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment*, 3.

was supported by her mother and Price's testimonies both within the narrative as well as in court. Her mother recalled that, at the time of the Ute attack, she and her daughter had been cleaning up after dinner when the gunfire began. Mrs. Meeker recalled both herself and Price being startled and panicked while Josephine immediately began moving them to the milk shed which was more secure than the house. Her mother claimed, "the girl was as cool as if she were receiving callers in the parlor."[17]

Although Josephine received the most credit for her level-headedness, all the women recalled working together to find the safest place to be. When organizing the women once the attack began, several of the other wives wanted to hide in the main bedroom of the house. Price and Josephine Meeker, recognizing that the main house would be a target and the roof could easily be lit on fire, suggested the milk shed. Price recalled advising that they "try to escape then as the Indians were busily engaged in stealing annuity goods." Not only were these women able to scrutinize the best hiding place, but they were able to overcome their panic and the initial instinct to stay put until a reservation man came to help them. Together, the women moved everyone to the relative safety of the milk shed and then waited until Utes entered the main house to attempt to flee.[18]

Once in captivity, the women continued to assert their bravery in the face of perceived danger and included stories of how they endured physical strain as well as times when nothing but their intellects kept them alive. In one example, Sharp explained how she and the other

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[17] Josephine Meeker, *The Ute Massacre: Brave Miss Meeker's Captivity, Her Own Account of It (Philadelphia, PA: Old Franklin Publishing House, 1879*), 4, 23. The narrative is written in third person which is unique from other self-published narratives at the time. However, as Josephine is known to be the author, it may have been a stylistic choice to mimic other narratives where captives dictated their story or told in an interview which was later published.

[18] Meeker, *The Ute Massacre*, 34-35. Varley argues that things like inventiveness, ingenuity, and practicality were also seen as public virtues in women, and, although Meeker's narrative was published eleven years before the Progressive Era, many of the "intentional" virtues which Varley links to the construction of national identity are displayed throughout the Meeker narrative. See *Americans Recaptured*, 19-21.

female captives were made to carry up to seventy pounds of goods on their back during long daily marches. Although exhausting, Sharp claimed that the great weight was nothing compared to the alternative of having to carry one of her captor's large two-year-old "papoose," as one of the captives was made to do when she could no longer bear the heavy load. Instead, Sharp and the other women turned their physical burdens into something of twisted amusement as the women took turns scratching the "filthy papoose's face" when the Sioux women supervising them were not looking.[19]

In the Meeker and Price captivities, female strength was defined through courage as well. Once captured, a "young buck" threatened to shoot Price and Josephine Meeker. In response, Josephine claimed "we told him to shoot away, and Mrs. Price requested him shoot her in the forehead. He said we were no good squaws because we would not scare." Later, the leader of the Ute band holding them captive, Chief Douglass, threatened to shoot Josephine in the head to get her mother to cooperate. Josephine claimed that she "resolved not to be in the least bit afraid of them," and she dared him to "shoot if you want to! I am not afraid of you, nor your gun!" She continued to taunt Douglass until other Ute men began laughing and mocking him as well. This was not the only time that Josephine claimed to have taunted or mocked her captors. She called them boys and told them they should go off and become women as they would be better at it than being men. Meeker claimed the men began to respect her for her confrontational manner, and she was never in the least bit of danger.[20]

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[19] Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*, 151. Physical endurance was a theme that emerged in Arivella Meeker's narrative as well, but it did not become prevalent until later court documents emerged claiming that she had variously had her hip broken, been shot in the leg, or was already lame before captivity but was able to ride a horse bareback for days on end without complaint.

[20] Meeker, *The Ute Massacre,* 9-10, 17, 38; "Lights and Shadows of Indian Life," *New York Herald* (New York, NY), Nov. 2, 1979. The particulars of the incident with Douglass are somewhat unclear. Price's portion of the narrative put her in the place of Josephine, defying Douglass to shoot her should she not comply. Similarly, the artwork in the narrative also replaced Josephine for Price. However, newspapers, Josephine's court testimony, and Josephine's narrative all had Josephine challenging the chief.

Meeker used a Ute man named Persune as a way of proving how much respect her courage had earned her. The women were given to certain men among their party after capture. Persune won custody over Josephine who wrote that "I must add in justice, that this Indian became I may say almost devoted to me after this incident, and treated me with respect and considerable kindness." Illustrative of the power her bravery had over this Native man, Meeker detailed how Persune would get on his hands and knees so she could step on him to mount and dismount her horse. Meeker claimed "this was a mark of special favor, and was done for none of the rest, nor did I see it done among the Indians at all." Thus, some women conquered, in a manner of speaking, their indigenous captors with their bravery and refusal to show fear in the face of death.[21]

Other women shared how they outwitted their captors or used their own planning, in combination with physical strength, to contrive of their own escapes. An *Evening Telegraph* (Philadelphia) article from 1867 wrote of the Kimball family's captivity. Held at times by Sioux and Snake groups for eighteen years, the Kimballs, husband and wife, had several children in captivity. They had been kept together as a family until Mrs. Kimball, without consulting her husband for fear he or their captors would prevent her from carrying out her plan, helped a young Native American girl from a neighboring tribe escape torture and death. For this, Kimball was "punished severely" and separated from her family for the remaining two years of their captivity.

[21] Meeker, *The Ute Massacre*, 9,11. Although Meeker claimed Persune was nothing but gentlemanly and doting on her in her narrative and interviews, her sealed testimony revealed her dislike for Persune. She revealed that he was considered her husband and had repeatedly raped her. For his part, Persune became a romantic figure- the indigenous man in love with the young, beautiful white female captive- as time passed, and Brown mentions in *The Gentle Tamers* that it was believed he mourned the Josephine's death years after her captivity by painting himself in black.

She expressed no regret for what she had done and emphasized that she had acted of her own free will.[22]

Kelly similarly shared several stories as evidence of her own intellect. At one point, her Ogalalla captors were on the run from the U.S. Army, fighting several small skirmishes over a series of weeks. She recalled being aware of the danger the U.S. military presence brought to her as a captive and knew, if it came to it, she would be killed rather than released. When wounded Sioux men were brought back to camp, Kelly "endeavored to impress them with an air of my superior knowledge of surgery, and as nurse, or medicine woman." She hoped it would raise her value enough as a captive for them to keep her alive if possible.[23]

Sometimes Kelly's quick thinking and "superior knowledge" involved discerning tricks which she claimed the Ogalalla would occasionally test her with. At one time, a messenger named Porcupine was sent from Fort Sully with orders to collect Kelly from captivity. When Porcupine handed Kelly the letter, he made it known that he had already been paid for the task before having completed it. He also said his wives were being held hostage until he returned either with Kelly or a report of where she was. This information made Kelly suspicious and she "knew this faithless messenger would not be true to his promise." Kelly later learned that he had reported her dead to those at the fort, and he had known all along his wives would be safe because "white men did not kill women."[24]

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[22] "Touching Incident: Another Romance Connected with the Kimball Family, Lately Rescued from Indian Captivity," *Evening Telegraph* (Philadelphia, PA), Feb. 26, 1867.

[23] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 100-101. The *Evening Telegraph* similarly mentioned Native American value of white healers. Kimball's husband, a doctor prior to captivity, was so highly regarded that, after the incident in which Kimball contrived the escape of the indigenous girl, their captors only beat her and sent her to another tribe rather than killing her.

[24] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 129-130.

At another point in the narrative, the chief's youngest wife took Kelly on a walk away from camp. She told Kelly that just down the ridge was a group of U.S. soldiers whom Kelly could run to; the wife would not stop her. Again, Kelly was suspicious of the young woman's sudden friendliness and, "remembering the treacherous nature of the people I was among, I repressed every sign of emotion." When the wife received no reaction of hope or joy from Kelly, she returned to camp to tell Chief Ottawa that Kelly had been talking about how badly she wanted to escape. Hearing the lies, Kelly "resolved to take advantage of the affair," and inserted herself in the conversation, telling Ottawa that it was the young wife who had said she wished to run away and marry white men. The wife left the tent embarrassed, and Kelly felt pride in her ability to both read the young wife's true intentions and find a way to turn the situation to her own benefit.[25]

Kelly's greatest achievement in the narrative, however, was how she set into motion her own release. After Porcupine reported Kelly dead, she feared her husband and the military would give up looking for her. When asked to write a fake treaty letter on behalf of Ottawa, Kelly took the opportunity to inform the captain to whom she was writing of her identity. Given instructions to write a letter of peace which, "knowing their malicious designs," the Ogalalla did not plan on upholding, Kelly risked slipping a coded message into the treaty. Knowing her captors could not read English but would instead count the number of words she used, Kelly combined some words to and embed her message within the letter. After a series of correspondences, Kelly set a time for her to stand on a ridge so that the captain could see proof that she was a white woman

[25] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 131-133.

being held captive and not a Sioux trick. For her ingenuity, Kelly claimed a soldier offered eight hundred dollars immediately for her release.[26]

Following Kelly's covert correspondence, efforts to return her were renewed, and the Ogalalla finally agreed to bring her in to Ft. Sully. However, she learned that the goal was to lure U.S. soldiers out of the fort and stage an ambush. When a young Blackfoot named Jumping Bear approached Kelly and confessed possessing "more than ordinary feeling" towards her, Kelly saw an opportunity. She told the young man that he must prove his love to her by carrying a missive to the fort which he had to swear not to open nor read. She portrayed a touching scene in which Jumping Bear swore upon the moon that he would do as she asked, knowing that he betrayed his people for her. After waiting nervously for several days, Kelly was taken to the fort and quickly realized that her letter had been received. At the time planned for the Ogalalla ambush, Kelly claimed to have broken free and run to freedom.[27]

Josephine Meeker also talked about her role in her own return. After several weeks in captivity and many failed military attempts to retrieve the women, the Secretary of the Interior, Carl Schurz, to avoid more bloodshed, sent General Charles Adams, who was well known among the Utes, to find and return the Meeker women and Price. When the Ute women learned

[26] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 149-150. Kelly also helped her adopted daughter escape soon after their initial capture by dropping pieces of paper behind them along the trail in hopes of helping anyone sent to rescue them or as a trail back to their destroyed wagons which Mary could follow. She then slipped her daughter into some bushes as they were riding along. Kelly tried to use this method to escape as well but was almost immediately caught. Her daughter was eventually killed, whether by the Ogalalla or a different band is unclear. See *My Captivity*, 45-47. Kelly's companions, Larimer and her son, also escaped thanks to Kelly's planning though Kelly had intended the escape for herself. After sharing her thoughts on an overnight escape with Larimer, Kelly woke the next morning to find the Larimers gone, leaving Kelly alone in captivity.

[27] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 199-200. Like Josephine Meeker's description of Persune, Jumping Bear appeared several times throughout Kelly's narrative and was used to show Kelly's power over Native American men. She wrote that Jumping Bear would fall back and ride alongside her. He was saddened to do so because it was an "act of great condescension on his part, for these men rarely thus equalize themselves with women, but ride in advance." Unlike Persune, Kelly was not married to Jumping Bear and nothing is known about him after he turned Kelly's letter in at Ft. Sully although Kelly claimed to have tried seeking him out to thank him but guessed he was hiding in exile for having betrayed his people because of his unrequited love of a white woman. See pages 76-77.

that a white man was approaching, they forced her into a tent, the entrance of which was covered by a blanket and guarded by Ute women. When Adams arrived, Josephine recalled peeking over the blanket, her heart leaping with joy. She wrote "there was no necessity nor time for any sentimental overcoming, it was the moment for action." Afraid that Adams would pass through the camp without discovering her, Meeker claimed "the strength of Hercules seemed to possess me. Taking hold of the blanket I ripped it down as though it had been paper, and sprang outside the tent, where the squaw, a powerful-looking woman, confronted me." This woman was flung aside "like she had been a child," and Josephine marched up to a surprised Adams, stating who she was and where her mother and Price were being held separately from her. Like Kelly, Meeker had seen an opportunity for release, and she gathered all the strength she had to physically overcome her captors, claiming her own freedom.[28]

Women who spoke over their husbands, who were calmer and more prepared for interactions and even attacks from Native Americans were certainly not the wilting, meek, and gentle western women portrayed by earlier scholarship. These self-published women proudly proclaimed their physical feats of strength, like Meeker assuming the power of a Greek demigod, as well as their intuitive wits, like Kelly pretending to be a medicine woman or writing coded messages to coordinate her escape. In no narrative nor newspaper interview did these women apologize nor lessen their actions. Just as important, there were no references to divine intervention nor to motherly concern driving their actions. Many of these women were childless and unmarried young women; they acted for themselves. In Kelly's case, after she helped her

[28] Robert M. Utley*, Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973), 338-39; Meeker*, The Ute Massacre*, 5, 19. Arivella Meeker also spoke of how the women, once freed, took over the Ute camps, taking supplies back and become voices of authority over those who had recently held them captive. Adams, in his official court testimony applauded them for their ability to be able to quickly recover and organize supply distribution.

adopted daughter escape, she spent the rest of the narrative focused purely on her own survival. Further, the women were not accepting of white nor Native male authority, often questioning, criticizing, and pointing out the failings of the men in their narratives. They directly turned against what society would have expected from them in such a situation, and they did it in bold, unapologetic language.[29]

Writing during the Reconstruction and Progressive Eras, with the rising tides in women's suffrage, public reform efforts, and bureaucratic changes within the Bureau of Indian Affairs, captive women's feminist tone perhaps reflects this period of upheaval within the United States. What is intriguing about captive women's self-portrayals and bold claims, was the public's reception of these women which reveals a re-examination of the value of white women in Euro-American society. As suggested by Faragher, it was acceptable for women to briefly assume masculine roles of decision making and even physical action. However, women were expected to then return to their "refined" state afterwards. Meyerowitz argues the same conclusion about wage earning women: jobs were either a temporary support for the family until a woman could be married or an emergency supplement to a husband's job in times of economic need. Masculinity and independence were only acceptable to society so long as they were born of necessity for a short period of duress. The same could perhaps be accepted of women who shared their captivity experiences. Women might have been so bold in their writing simply because they knew it would be excused due to the situation. However, similar newspaper pieces reveal a sort

[29] The exact power that young single women's narratives had is unclear. Varley's suggestion about the image of the "Manly Mother" falls short in that some, like Kelly and the Meeker women, never went on to remarry and embrace their perceived domestic duties. An answer may be seen in Varley's discussion of the Hall sisters of the "elevation" that captivity had on young women as will be seen in the next section of this chapter. See *American's Recaptured*, 14-15, 170-172.

of elevation of the white woman returned from captivity with the creation of statues, landmarks, art shows and so on to memorialize the women and their actions during and after captivity.[30]

Primarily, newspapers focused on returned women's physical appearance before describing their actions. During this period, the public seemed to be preoccupied with the concept of these captive women physically remaining white in appearance. This can be seen in a various small articles reporting the return of a captured woman such as an 1871 report in *The True Northerner* which only listed the last name, McIntyre, a captive white woman but noted that, despite her time in captivity, she remained "fair skinned" and only a little sun burned. *The Salt Lake Herald* reported in 1905 about a "young woman" who had been held captive for six years, and, although she barely spoke English anymore, she was most definitely white. A young woman, referred to in columns from both the *Columbus Journal* and the *Turner Country Herald* as Medicine Hat Girl, was seized from Cree traders in 1890 who had been claiming her as half-Cree. The articles described her as blonde-haired, blue eyed, and having a "prepossessing face," and this was evidence enough for authorities to ascertain that she had been stolen as a child. A more well-documented captivity, that of the four Germain sisters, was reported in publications across the country, including the *State Journal*, *New York Herald*, and *Indiana State Sentinel*. In an 1874 interview with the two youngest sisters, the *State Journal* noted that Juliana Arminda Germain told her story with "compelling naivete" and that both her and her sister were still "civilized" in appearance, not having allowed their captors to have an impact on their

[30] Varley stresses public commemoration during the Progressive Era, claiming that monuments were a way in which rural areas connected themselves with the larger American identity, and having ties to a famous captivity allowed both the captive as well as the makers of the monuments to remain relevant as well as active participants in nation building. See *Americans Recaptured*, 8-15, 172. Namias also promoted the concept of public memorialization as an indicator of shifting gender notions. In discussion of nineteenth century artist's depictions of captivity, she noticed that white men had been pushed to the background and women became the center of the piece. This is interpreted as presenting the "anxious view of North American expansion" which many Euro-Americans felt at the time and, Namias concludes, women began to be seen as the key figures in that expansion. See *White Captives*, 264-67.

appearance, playing into popular sentiments on scientific racism and the "appearance" of civilization.[31]

After establishing that women returned visibly white, journalist tried to testify on the women's "good character" or their ability to keep themselves "civil in habit," as can be seen with the mention of the Germain girl's supposed naivete. Sometimes an anecdote was given to reveal this, such as with Mrs. Kimball. In an 1867 story about the Kimball family passing through town, the *Evening Telegraph* reported a scene at a train depot where a group of unnamed Native Americans recognized Kimball and her young son. The child ran to the group and began speaking with them in their language. The author noted that her son's actions made Kimball embarrassed and, with tears in her eyes, she pulled the boy away. When one of the Native Americans was revealed to be the young girl Kimball had helped escape, Kimball became even more embarrassed and politely refused the girl's embrace. It appears that this column was meant to show that, despite almost two decades in captivity, during which her two children were born, Kimball sought to maintain the separation between Native peoples and whites. This was even more exaggerated given that the group of Native Americans at the depot were friendly towards the family, and Kimball had even risked her own safety to save one's life during her time in

[31] "Recovery of a White Girl from Indian Captivity." *True Northerner* (Paw Paw, MI), Feb. 3, 1871; "White Girl Rescued from Indian Captivity," *The Salt Lake Herald* (Salt Lake City, UT), March 24, 1905; "Another White Captive," *The Columbus Journal* (Columbus, NE), April 9, 1890; "Another White Captive," *Turner Co. Herald* (Hurley, SD), 1890; "The Captive Children," *The State Journal* (Frankfort, KY), Dec. 4, 1874; "Our Western Barbarians." *New York Herald* (New York, NY), Nov. 28, 1874; "Stolen by the Indians," *The Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), Dec. 8, 1874. These short pieces, frequently no more than a paragraph, which vaguely mentioned returned female captives were reprinted throughout several newspapers throughout the country. Sometimes the articles credited the publication which they had taken the piece from but more often did not. This makes it difficult to know the original source as well as just how many women were taken and or returned from captivity during the period from 1865 to 1920. See also Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 55-70, 166-175 on scientific racism and its role in the portrayal of Native Americans.

captivity. Kimball's actions perhaps suggested to the author that she was ready to move past her captivity and back into white society[32]

Similarly, Jessie Lacomber was tested by a journalist in an 1888 interview with the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*. The man offered her his personal calling card, a test to see if she remained innocent to the reasons why a man would offer such a thing to a young, and notably attractive, woman. He described it to be an "illustration of her innocence" that Lacomber had to ask another woman the reasons behind the card. Having established her beauty and innocent nature, the man began to compliment her intellect. He commented that "she evinces an intelligence on current topics that amount almost to intuitive knowledge." Though Lacomber had no formal education due to spending a large portion of her youth in captivity, the author was impressed by her intellect and surprised at how much the woman took interest in current events. Further, though he noted her lack of formal education, the author seemed to value Lacomber's ability to understand, interpret, and discuss current issues, revealing that she had not allowed her captivity experience to "corrupt" her mental facilities. However impressed, the journalist still felt it necessary to preface these compliments with testaments of Lacomber's beauty and purity before offering praise of a more masculine nature.[33]

Also universally praised for her beauty, Kelly was often referred to as the "fair captive" in publications before anything else was ever said about her. An 1883 piece from the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, recounted notable events in the Indian Wars in the West in 1865, including Kelly and her daughter in a discussion about Ft. Sully and tensions with the Sioux. It began by

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[32] "Touching Incident, *The Evening Telegram*.

[33] "An Indian Captive: A Romance More Thrilling than Vagaries of Dime Novels," *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* (Wheeling, WV), Dec. 21, 1888. Lacomber's husband, Dosh or Dash Kensington, was also said to have been taken captive in his youth and, after his return to Euro-American society, became a military translator. It is interesting that Kensington was of no interest to the columnist as he likely would have offered more "insight" into the character of Native peoples which Burnham and Sayre both suggest was a sort of public fascination.

saying her adopted daughter was killed the day after the "fair captive," Kelly, helped her escape. The author, Sergeant George H. Holliday, claimed to have witnessed these events and praised Kelly who, "by her skill and courage," succeeded where "all efforts had thus far failed" and led the Sioux "into a trap, or ambush and had them all captured." This article also mentioned her cleverly concealed notes with which she "saved herself, the fort, her husband's money, and captured the rascals who had so long held her in bondage." The article only devoted a few lines to Kelly and the Ft. Sully incident, but the same patterns visible within Lacomber's interview emerged. Kelly was noted as beautiful, fair, and a frugal wife who saved her husband's money before she could be praised for doing something as big as saving a fort and everyone inside from an ambush and possible death.[34]

Praise for captive women's intellect and bravery also appeared in court testimony. In the wake of the White River incident and the Meeker women and Price's captivity, several weeks of trials were held to access what had gone wrong leading up to the Utes taking violent action and how to punish them for it. Colonel John Steele penned a letter testifying to the Meeker women's good character that was read during the 1880 trial. Of Josephine Meeker, Steele wrote "Miss Josie seemed to me to have inherited much of the force and enthusiasm of her father." Contradictorily, Steele found Josephine to be good because she was like her father, full of ambition and determination, nothing like the gentle nature he prescribed to her mother. Steele continued, writing that "she appeared to have overcome the feeling of disgust which savages must inspire in any lady, and to have entered on her duty of teaching with the highest missionary

[34] "On the Plains in '65: By Sergeant Holliday," *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* (Wheeling, VA), June 25, 1883. Journalists notably worked to re-establish the domestic sphere within their interpretations of women's captivities. This is especially interesting considering scholars like Rex and Namias who conclude that the destruction of domesticity caused by captivity was what allowed women to behave outside the realm of their normal gender roles both during captivity and after in their writing.

spirit." Despite being compared to her father, Steele still wrote of her as a "lady," and further praised her for taking initiative in educating "savages." Meeker did not entirely escape the public image of a good woman; Steele still wrote that she taught with a "missionary spirit" rather than seeking an occupation for her own personal goals or gain. This statement nonetheless complimented Josephine for taking an active role on the reservation as an educator of the Utes and thus a part of the popular cultural ideology that education of Native American youth was the best way to "civilize" them as a people.[35]

While returned captive women were publicly upheld for both their feminine and more masculine qualities and actions during and after captivity, this period also saw the beginning of an effort to memorialize them in monuments. Some monuments raised were of women who had been taken captive during the Colonial Era and were just then having their stories revisited in newspapers as well as revised narratives. In 1874, a seven and half foot tall statue of Anne Duston was erected on Contoocook Island, New Hampshire. Duston had been taken captive in 1697 and escaped by killing and scalping some of her captors. The statue portrayed her holding a tomahawk in one hand and several scalps in the other, meant to commemorate both her actions and the "spirit of New England women." Duston's statue, and the meaning behind it, are striking. In posing her holding a tomahawk and collection of scalps, the creator of the statue connected her with violence, specifically her own over Native Americans. Further, it suggested conquest

[35] US Congress, Testimony in Relation to the Ute Indian Outbreak, Taken by the Committee of Indian Affairs of the House of Representatives, 46th Cong., 2nd sess., 1880, H. Misc. Doc. 38., 110-112. The topic of Josephine's occupation on the reservation is an interesting one. Brown claimed the Meeker was a "modern" woman even before moving to the reservation or the experience of captivity and includes a brief description of her as a recently graduated from Oberlin College and with hair shorter than fashionable, which apparently were the two qualifications of a modern woman in 1880. See *The Gentle Tamers*, 21-22. Meeker was also the reservation teacher, one of the occupations Margaret D. Jacobs listed in which white women sought active participation in assimilation of Native Americans. See "Maternal Colonialism: White Women and Indigenous Child Removal in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940," *Western Historical Quarterly 36* (2005): 453-76.

over Native Americans, conquest being led by a female specifically. Duston was not portrayed as a "gentle tamer" but rather as a part of the violent conquest of America.[36]

Another large series of monuments was erected in 1917 to honor the path that Minnie Schwandt Smith had taken during the three weeks she had been held in captivity at age fourteen. The article reported that, at age seventy, Smith took a tour of the various stone markers and recalled some of her captivity. She claimed to have been returned to Camp Release during the Red Cloud Wars along with "thousands" of other white children who had been brought back in mass exodus. Smith later testified in court against some Sioux men who had killed her family and taken her. She proudly recalled that several of those men were hung because of her testimony. Although not much is known about Smith's captivity specifically, it was notable enough to in the early twentieth century to erect a trail of monuments to memorialize some of the larger events.[37]

Similarly, Abbie Gardner Sharp actively took part in petitioning and designing the monument to the Spirit Lake Massacre. In 1895, the *Spirit Lake Editorial* announced the approval of five thousand dollars in funds to erect a monument. It praised Sharp's efforts in petitioning local and state government, with Sharp even sitting in on multiple sessions with the state legislature until they heard her petition. For her efforts, Sharp was also commissioned oversee the monument's construction, location, and design. In an 1897 letter later published in *The Annals of Iowa*, Sharp wrote that she felt she had the "authority to ask" for support of the

[36] "A Monument," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Chicago, IL), June 11, 1874. Duston's monument was variously reported throughout several different publications in which her name is spelled several different ways. It also appears at Anne Dustou and Hannah Duston. As Anne Duston appears to be the spelling which Martino and Namias use, it was chosen for the purposes of this paper. Namias described Duston as an exception to the rules of female narratives and wrote that her "Amazonian behavior" characterized a brief feminist effort by male authors within the genre before they returned to the "frail flower" and sentimental fiction of the 18th and 19th century. See *White Captives*, 263.

[37] "Indian Captive Visits Scenes of Her Captivity," *Redwood Gazette* (Redwood Falls, MN), July 4, 1917.

monument and the addition to it of a tablet of names listing everyone involved in her rescue as well as everyone who died during the Spirit Lake attacks. A separate marker was raised at a campsite Sharp and her fellow captive woman had stayed at during their early days with the Sioux. Sharp was praised by local newspapers for both for her outspoken and persistent efforts to memorialize the events at Spirit Lake, and she was considered notable enough for a separate marker to be created for her and her other female captives.[38]

Written character testimonies in articles and monuments do not encompass the extent of interest in white women returned from captivity with Native Americans. The Kimball family's travels across the country were reported like modern day celebrity sightings, and the family supposedly gained "world renown" for their near two decades of captivity. An oil portrait of Cynthia Anne Parker, a captive of the Comanche, was exhibited in New Orleans to commemorate the "famous woman" who also played a part in her own escape. Fiction authors moreover sometimes credited real captive women's stories as their inspiration such as in an interview with Charles Martin Scanlan where he claimed the Hall girls, who also had monuments raised in honor of their captivity's during the Blackhawk Wars, inspired his dramatized retelling, the *Indian Creek Massacre and Captivity of Hall Girls* (1916). Plays were advertised based on plots of captivity and female cunning, often right next to columns reporting actual women having been taken captive. Some even claimed false captive experiences such as in the case of Adah

[38] "The Spirit Lake and Okoboji Monument," *The Annals of Iowa 2,* no. 2 (1895), 69-73; Abbie Gardner Sharp, "Mrs. Abbie Gardner Sharp's Letter," *The Annals of Iowa 3,* no. 7 (1898), 550-551. Varley directly mentions Sharp's monument in reference to the purpose of commemorative efforts and argues that the markers which Sharp raised funds for also features a list of those involved in the process of petitioning for the monument. Varley concludes that interest in creating monuments about captivity also was about connecting to the frontier past as well as participating in the nation's future. See *Americans Recaptured*, 170-79.

Isaacs Menken, an actress who advertised a mysterious and undocumented experience of captivity among Native Americans to create interest in herself and further her stage career.[39]

Newspaper articles and character testimonies published about these women in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveal that Euro-American society was undergoing a re-evaluation of women's role in society. Scholars of captivity narratives, like Rex, Varley, and Namias, suggest that times of social and political upheaval, as seen during the Reconstruction and Progressive Eras, and unfamiliar environments, as in Euro-American efforts to settle the West and forced trans-cultural interactions with Native Americans, served as the catalysts to this re-structuring. While the media largely appeared to still promote such socially acceptable feminine characteristics like gentle natures, motherly love, devoted wives, purity, and naivete, specific instances of captive women discussed here reveal more masculine attributes such as violence, initiative, and independence could also receive public approval. Statues, monuments, art, and entertainment all drew inspiration from these women's storied heroics and not only memorialized women for these actions but placed them at the forefront of Western conquest. Public approval shift to captive women surviving on their own, not in the home or beside their husband, but navigating a dangerous environment and, by their own accounts, conquering it.

[39] "A Touching Incident, *The Evening Telegraph*; "A Story of Indian Captivity," *Semi-Weekly South Kentuckian* (Hopkinsville, KY), Feb. 13, 1885; "Fennimore." *The Democrat* (Mineral Point, WI), Jan. 6, 1916; Brown, *The Gentle Tamers*, 157-158. The oil painting of Cynthia Anne Parker is curious as she gave birth to her half-Comanche son, Quannah Parker, during her time in captivity. Her son went on to become a very influential Comanche leader and appeared in Herman Lehmann's *Nine Years Among the Indians* (1927). Scanlan's novel also recounted that a man named William Munson publicly declared his intentions to marry one of the Hall sisters because he admired "the brave." Munson and Rachel Hall eventually did marry, and Varley uses this as evidence of public notions of "elevation through contact" of captive women. She also estimates that a crowd of five thousand people were present at the ceremonial reveal of the Hall sister's monument in 1906. See *Americans Recaptured*, 170-72.

Earlier scholars like Myres, Faragher, Jefferey, Brown, and Meyerowitz suggested that Western women chose perceived masculine mannerisms on rare occasions of necessity. Women's self-characterizations of their actions during captivity, however, reveals quite the opposite. Namias, Burnham, Varley, and Rex all promote the notion that, with captivity, women's domestic sphere was disrupted, allowing women to use the moment of disorder to make political statements or exhibit behavior which crossed into the masculine sphere. These women wrote of how they conquered fear and panic quickly, at times faster than their male companions, and expressed the ability to adapt for survival, be it through wit or physical endurance. Further, they advertised their actions when they returned from captivity rather than reverting to social expectations of behavior which will further be discussed in Chapter Three.

The reorganization of domesticity and re-valuing of women's roles, particularly in their relation to the Euro-American suppression of Native peoples, should be viewed through the notion of nation building. From 1865, the United States underwent considerable social and political changes with Reconstruction, reforms in Indian policy, the rising tide of feminism and Progressive Era reform groups, as well as increasingly sentiments of nationalism and ethnocentrism. Although scholars defined this period as a time of "nation building," of which women were increasingly becoming a part of, it would perhaps be more appropriate to define it as a time of re-ordering of national identity. Captive women played a part in this re-ordering through sharing their captivity experience and defining a new place for women. However, as will be seen in the next chapter, with their new inclusion in the national identity, women also worked to other their "savage" Native American captors, ultimately excluding them from American "civilization.

Altering the Savage Myth

During Fanny Kelly's nearly six-month captivity with a group of Ogalalla Sioux, she met a Native American man who carried a letter from a United States general, a General H. Shirley, which pardoned the man for committing "indiscriminate slaughter of men, women, and children." The man allowed Kelly to read his letter of pardon in which the Native man was offered "friendship, food, and clothing." When Kelly asked if the man intended to keep his promise of peace, the man laughed and showed her a puzzle game he had made to prove his intentions. Kelly realized that the pieces of the game were fingers from white people he had killed, and "the bones had been freed from the flesh by boiling, and being placed upon a string, were used for playing some kind of Indian game." Even after her captivity had ended, Kelly could not escape the memories of such "heathenish acts of these Indians." Both morbid and gruesome, this image is one of many employed by free captive women to show the supposedly inherent cruelty and bloodlust of their Native American captors.[1]

Comparing themselves to their captors was not unusual for women's captivity narratives; this comparison, in fact, began in the Colonial Era when this genre first began to develop. White female captives during the colonial period were posed as sinless Madonna figures surrounded by their blood-thirsty heathen indigenous captor, and captivity narratives focused on Native peoples' lack of a Euro-centric religion and their inherent connection with the "dark woods" which possessed them with Satanic powers. Although narratives published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century did not centralize religious elements of the Savage Myth as much,

[1] Fanny Kelly, *My Captivity: A Pioneer Woman's Story of her Life Among the Sioux* (Toronto: Maclear, 1872), 143.

the comparative style of writing continued with a new focus on culture. Gordon M. Sayre suggests that the public's interest in captive experience was the immersion into an "exotic" society which led captives to write "systematic descriptions of their captor's culture." In this way, returned female captives wrote early "ethnographies" which anthropologists mined for source material, labelling the women as informants and witnesses to all the "savage faces" of Native American society.[1]

Although religion remained a topic of comparison, it became an element of the "primitive savage," a theory developed with the aid of scientific racism. Women in captivity wrote of their captor's primitive habits and displayed them as evidence that Native peoples could not and would not ever equal white civilization. Another face of the Savage Myth which women chose to focus on was the violent, blood-thirsty savage. Again, this element had its origins in Colonial Era narratives which often focused on the brutality of the attack and capture as well as the various tortures endured during captivity. Earlier authors used this theme as evidence of the endurance of female captives and their faith in God which allowed them to tolerate the pain and violence. In post-Civil War narratives, when it became more common for women to write their own stories, torture and violence were used to prove the strength of their own characters, titillate the audience with tales of unbelievable brutality, and further prove that the only language Native peoples understood was violence.[2]

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[1] Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian From Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 80-86; Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Norman, Ok: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 25-115; Gordon M. Sayre, ed., introduction to *American Captivity Narratives* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 11.

[2] Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 55-70; *Slotkin, Regeneration Through Violence*, 94-115. Molly K. Varley argues that religious moralization in Colonial Era narratives never disappeared from the genre later but rather, during the American Revolution, Reconstruction Era, and Progressive Era, it developed into moral nationalism. She suggests later era narratives served as guides to American identity. See *Americans Recaptured: Progressive Era Memory of Frontier Captivity* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 6-8. Additionally, Michelle Burnham focuses on comparative style within narratives suggesting that it was used to reinforce "otherness" and "constructs and reinforces a binary division between captive and captor." Together, the divisions and well as

Having proved the primitive and blood-thirsty natures of their captors, women again adopted a Colonial Era theme by emphasizing their resistance to assimilation. For Colonial Era narratives, this was done to show that their heathen captors had not led them astray from Christianity. For later women, the resistance to assimilation was much more physical. By this point, Native American cultures were becoming exoticized and romanticized with many plays and popular fiction novels featuring white women carried off by Native "braves." Resistance to these exotic cultures now had to be visible; women returned from captivity needed to look, act, and essentially think like white people. Many women focused heavily on their appearance upon return as well as their emotions when they were received back into white society.[3]

Primitiveness, in the post-Civil War American West was not a new concept. The term "savage" was derived from early French traders in the New World who called Native Americans "le savauge" or "wild men," implying that Native peoples resembled an older version of man who was at home in the woods, in contrast to European societies. This term spread into the English colonies where the Puritans especially feared not only the woods around them, which they saw as a place of evil, but also the inhabitants of those woods. With the rise of scientific racism in the early 1800s, primitivism took on a different, more race driven meaning. Euro-Americans considered Native Americans and other non-white groups in the United States to be a lesser species of humans, ones that, because of their skull size, skin color, body shape, and so on, would never be equal to whites. Working in this context female captives tried to establish the

tragedies often associated with captive narratives of all origins, created sentiment among audiences which drove the popularity of the genre. See *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), 2-3.

[3] Dee Brown, *The Gentle Tamers: Women of the Old Wild West* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1981), 18-21.

"primitive nature" of their indigenous captors, focusing on appearance, culture, and behavior as indicative of Native American's inherent "baseness."[4]

More concerned with physical appearance than in the past, women often focused on Native American dress and bodies. This served the dual purposes of establishing their racial inferiority as well as minimizing Native Americans' perceived ferocity, making them more simple and almost animalistic caricatures. An example of this comes from Abbie Gardner Sharp, in her *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre* (1902). Witnessing her Sioux captors divvying their plunder after a raid on a white settlement, she wrote that they were especially fond of white clothing, but it was "grotesque" to see them trying to fit their bodies into the pieces of fabric. Specifically, Sharp focused on the women's bodies, describing them as "too broad-shouldered and brawny" to fit the clothes of white women. More than de-sexualizing indigenous women, Sharp used symbolism to make a point that Native peoples, or at least the Sioux who had taken her, were not meant to wear the clothing of civilization, that they could not fit into that garment of sophisticated society. Further, she found it grotesque that they even tried, suggesting Sharp's ridicule of assimilation efforts.[5]

Similarly, other female authors contrasted the value which whites and Native Americans placed on certain types of clothing. Josephine Meeker, in describing a Ute victory dance after her

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[4] Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 57-70; Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 57-93. Francis Paul Prucha also refers to the latter half of the nineteenth century as a period characterized by "an ethnocentrism of frightening intensity," which could have also encouraged these women's understanding of their indigenous captors. See *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, vol. 2 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 610.

[5] Abbie Gardner Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre and Captivity of Miss Abbie Gardner.,* 4th ed. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa Printing Co., 1902), 149. The fourth edition of Sharp's narrative was used for this project, but her narrative was first published in 1885. A lot of scholarship has been done on Native American bodies, especially in how they have been presented in art. See Vivien Green Fryd, "Two Sculptures for the Capitol: Horatio Greenborough's 'Rescue' and Luigi Presico's 'Discovery of America,'" *American Art Journal 19*, no. 2 (1987): 16-39. www.jstor.org/stable/1594479.

capture, wrote about how Ute men took clothes off the bodies of dead white soldiers, piled them up and burned them. In contrast, Utes dressed "in their best clothes, with plumes and fur dancing caps, made of skunk and grizzly bear skins, with ornaments of eagle feathers." The act of burning white soldiers' clothing and valuing animal skins and feathers as special, revealed to Meeker that, even when in possession of the garments of civilized society, the Ute still chose the more primitive apparel and upheld it as valuable.[6]

Fanny Kelly made a similar comparison but reversed it to show how little she valued an article of clothing which her captors saw as near priceless. Having "bravely" pled for her fellow captives' lives, the Ogalalla Chief Ottawa presented Kelly with a "wreath of gay feathers from his own head," which she later learned was a sign of favor for her bravery in standing up to him. At the time, however, Kelly wrote that she regarded it "merely as an ornament." Whether Kelly made the incident up to appear more heroic in her own writing is unclear, but it is significant how she devalued the article of dress as an "ornament." Knowing the head piece was given to her from the leader of the Ogalalla band, it is doubtful that Kelly really thought of it as a meaningless piece of clothing: even in the mid-nineteenth century, people associated feathered headdresses with Native American leaders, a part of the noble savage trope. Kelly's dismissal of the symbol of leadership and power, then, is significant. She belittled a Native American leader, making herself, a white woman and captive, more powerful because she saw the headdress from a "civilized" perspective, as just a bunch of feathers, a meaningless symbol.[7]

Women also connected attire to indigenous practices to completely transform their captors into caricatures of something not quite human. A fellow captive with Meeker, Sophrina

[6] Josephine Meeker, *The Ute Massacre: Brave Miss Meeker's Captivity, Her Own Account of It (*Philadelphia, PA: Old Franklin Publishing House, 1879) 14.
[7] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 39.

Price, recalled a Ute war dance in which she connected Ute behavior and dress to create a vision of devilish peoples, perhaps again referring to the Puritan belief that Native peoples were minions of Satan. In dancing around a fire, Price said the Ute first ran away from it and "then turn and dance back the other way, yelling and hallooing like frescoed devils. They had war suits, fur caps with eagle feathers, and they looked strangely hideous." Not only did the Utes wear the dress of primitive man, but Price interpreted their clothing much like earlier Puritan accounts. Her description, with the concept of "frescoed devils" served as a reminder that, although white society had changed over the centuries, Native American society was still the same. Native peoples were essentially still the minions of evil, dancing around fires and shouting into the night.[8]

Kelly also focused on the concept of Native American dress in what she labelled as her ethnography chapter. Like many women's narratives, she described her captors wearing stolen clothing, saying that Native people adorned themselves in stolen garments as "their limited ideas of civilization permitted." This involved the Ogalalla Sioux putting on clothes upside down, wearing pants as shirts, and warriors wearing ladies' silk gloves and hats or carrying around parasols. Kelly wrote, "their peculiar ideas of tasteful dress rendered them grotesque in appearance." Although, like Sharp, Kelly found Native people's efforts at wearing white clothing to be grotesque, she added an element of humor, essentially rendering her captors feminine and pathetic. The Sioux's use of white clothing, especially Native men's love of white women's fine garments, undermined indigenous men's masculinity and emphasized the idea that even Native

[8] Meeker, *The Ute Massacre*, 37. June Namias wrote on the connection of Native Americans to Satanic minions. Euro-American concerns over the perceived dangers of captivity was "a communion with or at least relentless exposure to representatives of the devil." Although Namias' scholarship did not encompass narratives past the late 18th century nor those from areas west of the Mississippi, the trend in literature can still be seen in these later narratives. See *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 2-8.

American men could not equal white women. Further, Native American efforts at being civilized, represented by Kelly's captor's misuse of white garments, was seen as a pitiful, pathetic, and hopeless effort which Kelly found laughable.[9]

While Kelly often described her captors as cartoonish, she also crafted an image of a different kind of primitiveness, dipping into the "noble savage" myth to depict a doomed, outdated, primitive "savage" chieftain. Chief Ottawa or Silver Horn was elderly, in declining health, and in possession of many wives of various ages among whom he included Kelly although she never admitted to being married to him. In description, Kelly wrote that "he was very old, over seventy-five, partially blind, and a little below medium height." Where Kelly depicted the Sioux warriors as dually cruel and goofy, she made their leader weak and ignoble. This description coincides with popular sentiments at the time of Kelly's writing in 1867; Native peoples were considered at the end of their time as a people, blind to the benefits of civilization, and wounded by the U.S. Army efforts at extermination.[10]

Kelly continued to describe Ottawa as very "ferocious and savage looking." She wrote:

> His face was red with stripes of black and around each eye a circlet of bright yellow. His long black hair was divided into two braids with a scalp lock on top of the head. His ears held brass wire rings, full six inches in diameter, and chains and bead necklaces were suspended from his neck; armlets and bracelets of brass, together with a string of bears' claws, completed his jewelry. He wore also leggings of deer skin, and a shirt of the same material, beautifully ornamented with beads, and fringed with scalp-locks, that he claimed to have taken from his enemies, both red and white.

[9] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 79-80.

[10] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 80. In Burnham's examination of the semi-fictional narrative about Maria Kittle's captivity, he suggests that both captives and their audiences turned their grief over the experience into "anti-Indian rage" which led to the formation of fantasies of "Indian extinction." See *Captivity and Sentiment*, 93. Frederick E. Hoxie also approached the subject late nineteenth century theories of Native American extinction within the preface to *A Final Promise*: *The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln, NE.: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

Part of her in-depth description of the Chief involved his horse, "a noble-looking animal" which was similarly decorated in scalps, bells, and "a museum of the trophies of the old chief's prowess on the war path." The image of a chief, adorned in all the finery of Native American custom, symbolizes their inherent lack of progress as a society: the bands' most respected leader was draped in dead things as a display of his authority. Further, this decoration of death as well as Kelly's reference to the "museum" reveals perhaps some influence of Euro-American beliefs in Native American extinction during the time of narrative's publication.[11]

Female captives additionally relied on descriptions of diet and eating habits as evidence of primitiveness in their captors. Sharp wrote that all "Indians" were "perfectly devoid of anything like delicacy of appetite, or taste, or decency in the matter" of diet. The Sioux ate animal flesh "cooked or raw, clean or unclean," and habitually devoured "animals that have lain dead until putrescence has well begun." They called rotting flesh, particularly that of fish, "wash-ta-do" or very good. Roasted or raw entrails were thrown on the ground for women to consume. Sharp wrote it was "no unusual thing, indeed to see the most delicate belles in Inkpaduta's train picking from the head of a papoose vermin" and "cracking them with their teeth." Women, when they had the spare time, also indulged in skunk hunting. Most horrifying to Sharp, however, was that her captors did not use seasoning, not even salt.[12]

Kelly similarly focused on Native people's diets as well as the lengths she went to avoid falling into indigenous habits. At first, she recalled that she was "deprived of every ameliorating comfort that might have rendered my existence pleasurable," which included food. When finally

[11] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 80-81. Again, Hoxie and Sayre's discussion on the public opinion about Native American extinction is valuable in understanding why Kelly may have given such a long, detailed description of the Sioux chief. Similarly, the emerging field of anthropology stressed the need to preserve these supposedly vanishing indigenous cultures through collection in museums. See Janet Catherine Berlo et al, "The Problematics of Collecting and Display, Part 1," *The Art Bulletin 77*, 1 (1995): 6-23. www.jstor.org/stable/3046076.
[12] Sharp, *History of Spirit Lake Massacre*, 153-54, 200-201.

offered sustenance, it was raw antelope meat which she refused to consume. Starving, Kelly wrote that, during long marches, she "plucked roses and fruit for food, while my savage companions feasted on raw meat. They did not seem to care for fruit and urged me to eat meat with them." Even when presented with cooked meat, Kelly would not consume it "owing to the filthy manner in which it was prepared."[13]

Like Sharp, Kelly was near distraught at the lack of seasoning used, saying her captors were always eating without "salt or bread." Further, Kelly found that the Ogalalla "had no set time for eating; will fast one day, and perhaps eat a dozen times the next." Lacking a set mealtime and not seasoning food both served as indicators to Sharp and Kelly that their Sioux captors had not developed as a civilization. Seasoning, although perhaps a luxury during the migration west, was considered necessity back east. To captive women, it seemed as if they had been kidnapped and taken beyond the line of civilization.[14]

Buffalo were another staple of Sioux diet and Kelly and Sharp's narratives both detailed buffalo hunts, the scenes of which focused on how their captors dismantled the animals instead of emphasizing the skill it took to hunt buffalo on horseback. In describing a buffalo hunt, Sharp wrote that the hunter "chops open the head, scoops out the brain, and gobbles it down with the voraciousness of a hungry bloodhound." She claimed the Sioux preferred brains, and blood which they "sucked with the avidity of a weasel, not waiting for it to die." Kelly's depiction of buffalo hunts reveals an animalistic desire for "ta-tonka," the Sioux name for buffalo. She believed the Sioux hunted buffalo for "mere sport, make an onslaught, killing great numbers of them, and having a plentiful feast." Like the Sioux of Sharp's narrative, Kelly claimed her captors were wasteful, eating only their favorite parts of the animal while it was still warm. Both

[13] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 68-69, 78.
[14] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 176-77.

women worked to undo the majesty with which Native American buffalo hunts have often been portrayed in popular art. Further, in a similarly racial manner to which African Americans have often been linked to an insatiable taste for watermelon, Native peoples were connected to buffalo meat. Both comparisons link non-white groups to specific foods which of which they desire and consume without dignity; the "other" was depicted like a child or wild animal which has not yet developed a control for its impulses. In these narratives, Sioux people were compared to hounds and weasels, obsessively seeking out buffalo, hunting in a frenzy, and then attacking the often still alive animals to suck their blood or eat their brains.[15]

Consumption of raw meat was no new theme in captivity narratives, however. Many Colonial Era narratives featured this habit, but it generally appeared in the form of cannibalism. None of the major female written captivity narratives in this later period, however, included cannibalism. The women appear to have focused more on a variety of different meats to show the lack of Native people's qualms about food sources, as seen with Sharp's focus on rotting fish and skunks. This reasons for this disparity between Colonial Era narratives and those of the post-Civil War period is unclear. Scholars like Sayre, Burnham, Namias, and Anne E. Hyde, frequently dismiss these later captivity narratives for their "rank sensationalism" and excessive dramatization included more for public appeal than accuracy, so it would make sense for cannibalism to appear during narratives from this time. However, given these same scholars' connection of captivity narratives to ethnocentrism and fascination with non-Euro-American cultures, women writing at this time may have been more factual in their depictions of Native

[15] Sharp, *History of Spirit Lake Massacre*, 225; Kelly, *My Captivity*, 76. The irony of calling Native Americans wasteful in their killing of buffalo when the American government was paying hunters to kill the animals to starve out the Native Americans appears lost on both Kelly and Sharp.

Americans than in previous eras of the genre. Their detailed observations were then attributed to all indigenous peoples rather than unique to the band which they held them captive.[16]

One other Native American dietary habit, dog-feasts, was related to religious beliefs; the ritual killing and consumption of an animal which white society considered a domestic pet repulsed captive women, who refused to eat the stews made for these feasts. Kelly felt "authorized to pronounce the dog-feast a truly religious ceremony, wherein the superstitious Indian sees fit to sacrifice his faithful companion to bear testimony to the sacredness of his vows of friendship for the Great Spirit." In her "ethnography" chapter, Kelly declared that the dog, "among all Indian tribes, is more esteemed and more valued than among any part of the civilized world." She wrote that dog-feasts were given by "all tribes of America, and by them all, I think this faithful animal, as well as the horse, is sacrificed, in several different ways, to appease offended spirits of deities, whom it is considered necessary that they should conciliate in this way." By asserting that indigenous religions still required the sacrificial killings of animals, of cherished pets no less, Kelly's narrative reflected the Euro-American notion that Native American society could not advance without intervention.[17]

Women were frequently critical in their writing on indigenous religions which they generally referred to as "spirituality." Recounting an incident where a fellow captive, Mrs.

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[16] Sayre, *American Captivity Narratives*, 17; Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment*, 4-5; Namias, *White Captives*, 7-8; Anne E. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011), 330-32. This does not necessarily mean that cannibalism disappeared altogether from captivity narratives. Herman Lehmann's *Nine Years Among the Indian*s (1927) details a scene where an enemy tribe is butchered, and the limbs were roasted and eaten.

[17] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 90-91. Hoxie and Prucha both focus on assimilation efforts during the latter half of the 19th century in which reform units, like the "Friends of the Indians" renewed efforts to "Americanize the Indians" through forceful assimilation. See *A Final Promise*, 115-145 and *The Great Father*, 609. Margaret D. Jacobs places women as active agents in reform groups as well as reservation teachers, administrators, and promoters of boarding school systems. See "Maternal Colonialism: White Women and Indigenous Child Removal in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940," *Western Historical Quarterly 36* (2005): 454.

Thatcher, was pushed into a river then shot, Sharp recalled that some wind blew through the river's reeds the next day, scaring Sharp's captors who believed it to be the vengeful spirit of Thatcher. The Sioux fled the area, leaving Sharp to conclude that "ignorance and superstition, cruelty and cowardly fear, legitimately belong together. They could pelt a defenseless drowning woman, but would flee in terror from the mere imagination of her disembodied spirit." She continued by questioning if her captors were even human, based solely on their propensity for cruelty yet belief in spirits.[18]

Kelly was much less bitter in her reflections than Sharp, seeming to find Native people's spirituality fascinating if not childish and humorous; her narrative provides the most detailed account of any form of indigenous spirituality which she claimed represented the beliefs of all Native Americans. She wrote, "they believe the sun to be a large body of heat, and that it revolves around the earth… they do not comprehend the revolution of the earth around the sun." This example of primitive society is significant, showing that, unlike Euro-centric society, Native people had not yet experienced a renaissance of knowledge which would separate religion from science and help them "comprehend" such higher concepts. She also observed that "they suppose the sun literally rises and sets, and that our present theory is an invention of the white man, and that he is not sincere when he says the earth moves around the sun." Suspicion of white men's motives, in both Kelly and Sharp's perspectives, was a part of indigenous peoples' inherent "ignorance and superstition."[19]

These characteristics of indigenous people, Kelly believed, also explained their "savage" inclinations as well. She wrote that Chief Ottawa's tent was decorated with one half devoted to the Great Spirit and one half devoted to an evil one, a wicked trickster. The Ogalalla feared the

[18] Sharp, *History of Spirit Lake Massacre*, 179.
[19] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 81-82.

latter, and "consider it only safe to propriate him occasionally by obedience to his evil will. This may account for some of their worst ferocities, and explain that horrible brutality of nature which they so often exhibit." The idea that Native Americans were driven by this evil spirit appeared again later in Kelly's writing. Just after her release, Kelly visited Fort Sully and was informed that the Ogalalla were so angered by her escape that they killed and scalped several U.S. soldiers. One man who participated in the attack was said to have fallen dead in his tipi the next day, and Kelly wrote that, "in their superstition, they deemed it a visitation of the Great Spirit for a wrong done." The evil spirit made the Sioux men kill in rage, and the benevolent spirit disciplined them for it.[20]

One should notice the parallels between Kelly's description of indigenous spirituality and Christian beliefs. She scoffed at the idea of a good and bad spirit, specifically using the word "deity" to imply a sort of paganism. The description of the roles of these two spirits, however, is very similar to the Christian concept of a benevolent God and an evil trickster, Lucifer or Satan, who leads people into sin. At another point, Kelly noticed seashells along the trail and, when questioned about them, her captors said there once was a great ocean wave that swept over the world and one man, and his family survived on a boat. When the water receded, the man landed and became father of all Native Americans. This story bears striking similarity to the Old Testament story of Noah's Ark. Again, Kelly ignored these similarities, seeing only the gap between her own Christian beliefs and her captors' beliefs as widely different. To modern day readers, the gap may not seem so wide, but, from Kelly's perspective, the difference between

[20] Kelly, *My Captivity* 82-83, 215-16. Where Colonial Era narratives tended to condemn all Native Americans as "heathens" with no description indigenous practices, Kelly's narrative gives almost excessive detail. This in part could be simply because the later narratives were largely not written by religious leaders as in the Colonial Era. However, it also relates to Namias' belief that survival in captivity required "some acceptance or at least understanding of their ways" and was driven by a deep curiosity for the other culture. See *White Captives*, 10-12.

using the term "Great Spirit" and "God," like the use or lack of seasoning on food, symbolized the difference of being primitive and civilized.[21]

As the characterization of the "primitive savage" shifted to focus on Native American bodies, diets, and spirituality in late nineteenth-century narratives, the perception of the "bloodthirsty savage" evolved within the genre as well. Colonial era captivity narratives concentrated on scenes of violence and disruption of the domestic sphere, through destruction of home and capture of women and children, during the initial attack and capture as well as the torture of the white captive. Most frequently, these tortures involved fire branding, running the gauntlet, and walking on coals; occasionally there were scenes where a fellow captive was tortured and eaten. In captivity narratives published from 1865 to 1920, the initial scene of attack remained an important part of portraying Native American violence. However, the scene centered less around a disrupted domestic environment as many women already felt displaced by the journey west, by settlement in an isolated place, or by constant removals to new homesteads. Torment of captives also continued to be a large part of the story, but women began mentioning these ordeals in passing, focusing almost exclusively on acts done onto other captives, specifically other captive women. Late era captivity narratives emphasized these moments of violence and cruelty to build sympathy for the women taken captive but also to prove women's strength in face of the unchangeably violent nature of Native Americans.[22]

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[21] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 191.

[22] One of the few things that scholars of both captivity narratives and women in the American West agree on is the concept of disruption of the domestic sphere. Both in migration west and captivity, women were mobile and out of place. For more on female displacement and protest to their new environment, see Sandra L. Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience 1800-1915* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1982) and Julie Roy Jeffrey *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West 1840-1880* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979). Namias suggests that the displacement of women, particularly in captivity, reinforced public sentiment that women were the building blocks of society but also allowed the women an opportunity to be emersed in a foreign environment

Torture was one of the most common ways to show the depth of this cruel savagery and garner audience sympathy for the captive experience. Women generally spoke sparingly or vaguely of violence done onto them although they were clearly aware of the danger of being taken captive during a time of war as well as the additional vulnerability of being a female in such a position. Upon capture, Kelly wrote that "all the horrors of Indian captivity that we had ever heard of crowded on our minds with a new and fearful meaning- the slow fires, the pitiless knife, the poisoned arrows, the torture of famine, and a thousand nameless phantoms of agony passed before our troubled souls." The phrase "all the horrors of Indian captivity" also appears in a multitude of newspaper interviews with various returned women as well as both Sharp and Meeker's narratives. Although almost never directly referenced, this could be a euphemism for rape as well as all the other forms of tortures which Kelly referenced.[23]

What tortures the women did admit to enduring were small torments which they often turned into evidence of their own strength in the face of near unendurable cruelty. Jessie Lacomber, in her 1888 interview with journalist from the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, claimed that she was tortured physically throughout the several years she was held captive; she endured "the tortures of the faggot and stake and tomahawk." Most significantly, she told her interviewer that she had sixteen long scars upon her body, the result of an angry and rejected Native American man who, having his marriage proposal rejected, began a "process or coercion" which was a "annoying at first, but gradually increased to such little persuasive means as gashing her

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and exposed to "alternatives to the status quo between cultures and between sexes." See *White Captives*, 11, 263-67.

[23] Kelly*, My Captivity*, 40. Reluctance to admit rape may have stemmed from publications like Richard Irving Dodges' *The Plains of the Great West*, in which he commits a brief but brutally detailed chapter on women taken captive by Native Americans. He relates these "sickening and horrible subjects," such as group rape, to warn women from straying too far from forts as well as inform the public that these incidents often go unpunished. For more on Dodge's largely ethnographic reflections, see *The Plains of the Great West and Their Inhabitants Being a Description of the Plains, Game, Indians, &c. of the Great North American Desert* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1877), 395-98.

with a knife." All this violence she endured and continued to choose pain and disfigurement rather than become wife to an indigenous man.[24]

After her capture, Arivella Meeker also remembered being propositioned by her Ute captors. She shared an incident where, riding on the back of Chief Douglass' horse and listening to him sing a "bawdy song," a "villainous looking Indian trotted alongside and slapped me on the shoulder and asked me how I would like to be his squaw, and he made indecent proposals." Later, while herself, her daughter, and Price were being searched and taunted by their increasingly intoxicated captors, she claimed "they even threatened me with death if I did not submit to their bestiality. Fortunately I escaped outrage, but had to submit to terrifying threats of violence and death." Although she reassured the reader that no "outrage" was committed against her, the real violence appeared to be the notion that she would ever be a Ute man's wife, not because of her husband who had so recently been killed in the attack, but because she equated such relations to bestiality.[25]

Other captives had similar perceptions of marriage or any sort of sexual contact with their captors. In an interview with a Yankton captive, Kelly revealed that the other woman, Mary Boyeau, was taken at fifteen during the Spirit Lake Massacre. By the time she met Kelly, Boyeau was sixteen and married against her will to a Yankton man who had bought her from her original captors. Of her husband, Boyeau said, "love a savage, who bought me to be a drudge and a slave! No! I hate him as I hate all that belong to this fearful bondage." She confided in Kelly that she was relieved to not be pregnant yet and hoped every day to die so she could escape her husband

[24] "An Indian Captive: A Romance More Thrilling than Vagaries of Dime Novels," *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* (Wheeling, WV), Dec. 21, 1888.
[25] Meeker, *The Ute Massacre*, 27.

and the chance that she would have a child with a Native American. For Boyeau, the situation was worse than death.[26]

Reluctance to share such situations was a mental torture for women which continued after their captivity. The reasons for this are revealed in Josephine Meeker and Sophrina Price's official testimonies. Interviewed by Charles Adams after their rescue, the women were questioned about what occurred to them during the weeks they were held by the Utes. Adams, in his official court testimony recalled asking Meeker if there had been any "indignity to her person," to which she had responded she "O, no Mr. Adams, nothing of that kind." In fact, Meeker first claimed to have been treated far better than expected. According to the transcript of their interview provided in *Gentle Tamers*, however, Josephine admitted that "we were insulted a good many times; we expected to be." She explained the "outrageous treatment at night" and that herself and the other women "dared not refuse them to any great extent" as their captors were violent drunks. Further, she shared that she had been examined by a Dr. Avery, "a lady physician in Denver," who was told to keep the information quiet because "we don't want the newspapers to get a hold of it."[27]

Price, in her interview with Adams, also initially denied having been raped. When Adams told her he knew she was withholding information, she declared it was none of his business. Finally, Price admitted to being "outraged" by one Ute man before being sold to another who did

[26] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 114-115. Boyeau's sentiments should be examined within the context that she was married to her rapist. Another possibility could be that Kelly made up Boyeau as a way of expressing her own sentiments on being a Ottawa's wife. Boyeau may have been Kelly's way of talking about the trauma without admitting to rape. Additionally, Kelly claimed Boyeau had been taken during the Spirit Lake Massacre (1857) and that she met Boyeau a year later; Kelly was taken in 1864, however. There is no reference to her in Sharp's narrative nor is she listed on the memorial to the victims and captives. There is a possibility that Kelly fictionalized the incident or claimed Boyeau had connections to an event which much of the public had been aware of.

[27] US Congress, Testimony in Relation to the Ute Indian Outbreak, Taken by the Committee of Indian Affairs of the House of Representatives, 46th Cong., 2nd sess., 1880, H. Misc. Doc. 388, 3; Brown, *The Gentle Tamers*, 30-31. The portion of the testimony which Brown quotes is cited to the same Congressional document used for this paper. However, it appears this part of the document is not included in the scanned edition.

the same. When asked why she had first denied it, Price replied, "O, as soon as I tell you you will go and tell some newspaper man, and they will have it all over the country, and I will be dishonored forever." Both Meeker and Price had a deep fear of newspapers and the public knowledge of their own sexual assaults. These two testimonies perhaps represent most why captive women who chose to avoid the topic of their own torture lest newspapers begin spreading rumors, true or untrue, about captive women in sexual situations with their Native American captors. With the increasing romanticization of the life in the American West, many may have doubted how unwillingly the women entered these sorts of interactions, something that would have been counterintuitive to the returned captive's goals of villainizing their captors not to mention making it more difficult for women to return to white society.[28]

Instead, most women chose to champion their own bravery in the face of the threat of any violence at the hands of their captors. Josephine Meeker wrote that "several times a day some of these fiends would come and strike us and tell us in the most hideous and revolting language what they would do to us. It was sometimes quite shocking and bestial, the way they talked." In one specific incident where the leader of the Ute band, Chief Douglass, whom Meeker claimed to be the "worst wretch" she had ever seen, began threatening her and Price. Meeker wrote "this red devil incarnate walked over to the tent where mother was and putting his knife at her throat, told her he was going to kill her." As in other similar incidents, Josephine Meeker called out to her mother and Price, telling them to be unafraid of these threats. She also claimed that she

[28] US Congress, Testimony in Relation to the Ute Indian Outbreak, 46th Cong., 2nd sess., 1880, H. Misc. Doc. 388, 8. This connects to a conversation on trauma and the impact on how these women remembered their time in captivity. Having something like their own rape in the headlines of newspapers would likely have made the women feel more powerless over their own lives and their own futures than they already did.

scolded her captors for their "meanness and cowardice;" such bravery, Meeker claimed in her narrative, kept her and the other women safe from sexual violence if not other physical torture.[29]

Similarly, Josephine Meeker's mother spoke of being tormented at the hands of the chief's son, Freddie Douglass. In her section of her daughter's book, Mrs. Meeker claimed that the chief's son, "whom I had taken into my house at the agency and washed, and taught, and doctored, and nursed, and made healthy, came to me in my captivity and mocked me worse than the rest. The Douglass blood was in him, and he was bad." Like her daughter, Mrs. Meeker claimed to have suffered more psychological torment in having to endure constant threats and the imagined pain of what could happen to her and her fellow captives. Even worse, the Utes who took them and kept them in this state of fear were people the women had been neighbors with at White River: Josephine was the schoolteacher and her mother the reservation doctor. Threats of violence were made worse by the fact that Mrs. Meeker had cared deeply for one of her captors, but, because it was "in his blood" to be cruel, Freddie was unable to resist the chance to turn against her. Equating indigenous nature, specifically "savagery," to the make-up of one's blood emphasized the perceived notion that Native Americans, no matter Euro-American efforts at "civilization," would always be, down to their genetic make-up, less than.[30]

Although most of the time Kelly only focusing on her own wit in outsmarting her captors, she included an incident where she was punished by her captors for speaking her mind. Angered by some young Sioux men mocking U.S. soldiers, Kelly verbally abused them as cowards. This angered the young men as well as many other members of the band who all "assailed me with burning fire-brands, burning me severely. They heated the points of arrows, and burned and threatened me sorely." Eventually she placated them by apologizing and promising to draw them

[29] Meeker, *The Ute Massacre*, 10-11.
[30] Meeker, *The Ute Massacre*, 28; Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 55-61.

pictures, and she concluded, "they were much like children in this respect." In this characterization, indigenous "savagery" was immature and impulsive. The Sioux jumped quickly to violence at Kelly's attempt to correct them, and she compared them to children, suggesting that Native people's temperaments did not progress much past adolescence. Additionally, she used this as an opportunity to show that, even when being tortured, Kelly had the upper hand over her captors whom she was able to manage like a parent.[31]

While most instances of violence towards female captives were about the dangerously lustful nature of Native American men, assaults by indigenous females were also a part of many captivity narratives. Sharp as well as Kelly, the Meekers, and Price all assured readers that Native American women were no allies to them during their time in captivity. Except for a few "civilized" indigenous women, female captives frequently described indigenous women as slaves to their cruel husbands. As cruelty was all Native women knew, captive women were treated similarly by them. Josephine Meeker wrote that, when the males left camp, the Ute women would gather around and taunt her. She wrote that "I took no notice of them, for had I done so they would most likely have set upon me and beaten me, and perhaps added torture, for they are particularly bitter and merciless toward any white women whom any of the braves show the slightest attention to." Meeker pushed aside the women's aggression as jealousy, and chose, in a similar manner to Kelly, to treat them as children, ignoring them rather than caving to their misbehavior.[32]

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[31] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 144-145. Posing herself as a parental figure may have also been Kelly's way relating to white paternalist rhetoric towards Native Americans. Prucha also suggests that the latter half of the 19th century was a "high point of paternalism" even if exact phrases like "Great Father" had almost disappeared. *The Great Father*, 609. Kelly's depiction of managing her captors may have been an attempt at making herself, a white woman, part of this power dynamic.

[32] Meeker, *The Ute Massacre*, 12.

Where captive women were perhaps reluctant to discuss their own mistreatment in too great of detail, they did include fellow women's misfortunes in captivity to emphasize Native American brutality. Sharp's narrative included two such graphic scenes. A fellow captive, Mrs. Thatcher, was just recovering from an illness when their captors decided to cross a river on a bridge made of several logs. According to Sharp, there was no warning nor altercation while Thatcher and herself were crossing; Thatcher was simply shoved into the river by an "insolent young savage." Once she resurfaced and swam for the shore, she was "met by some of the other Indians, who were just coming upon the scene; they commenced throwing clubs at her, and with long poles shoved her back again." Finally, Thatcher stopped to rest on a rock, and it was at that point she was shot and killed, ending her "suffering as a captive in the hands of these worse than monsters." Sharp used this scene to reveal a level of brutality and joy in violence which she perceived as beyond the capabilities of white man. The Sioux men who pushed Thatcher in and allowed her to swim ashore only to beaten back, did so for entertainment alone, slowly tearing down her hope as the current exhausted her body.[33]

Sharp's other fellow captive, Mrs. Noble, also suffered a rather brutal death. One evening, Inkapaduta's son tried forcing Noble to leave the tent she shared with Sharp. "Conscious of her superiority to her masters in everything except brute force," Noble refused and was dragged out of the tent. Just a few feet outside, the Sioux man "struck her three blows, such as only an Indian can deal," and, leaving Noble to slowly die of her injuries, came into the tent to

[33] Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*, 175-177. In Kelly's narrative, Boyeau who tells a story of a Mrs. Fletcher who lost her balance crossing a big river, and, when she was unable to get out, was shot by her captors. It is difficult to know if Fletcher was supposed to be Thatcher, but, given Kelly's claim that Boyeau was taken in the Spirit Lake incident, it is likely that it was meant to be the person. Kelly, *My Captivity*, 117. Burnham also suggested that, by the 19th century, the genre had "degenerated" and was corrupted by fictionalization to sell copies. *Captivity and Sentiment*, 4-5. Sharp may have been trying to connect her own narrative to the more famous one's surrounding the Spirit Lake Massacre.

wash the blood off his hands. Sharp recalled that "the piteous groans from my murdered companion continued for half and hour or so" before Noble finally passed. The following morning, Noble's body was taken up by other members of the band, further mangled, used for target practice, scalped, and ultimately left unburied for animals to scavenge. Noble's scalp was placed upon a pole which some Sioux members waved around and even whipped Sharp in the face with several times. Sharp wrote that Noble had been "left to die alone, within a few feet of those she had faithfully served." This scene, which serves as one of the most memorable and impactful moments in Sharp's narrative, emphasized that even loyalty to Native Americans could not save Noble from a violent death.[34]

In comparison to displays of excessive cruelty towards other white female captives, women added an element of cowardliness to their captor's supposed bloodlust. After the Ute attack on the White River Reservation, Josephine Meeker remembered being taken to a camp where herself, her mother, and Price were left with Ute women while the men went back to fight U.S. soldiers. When the Ute men returned later that evening, bearing bloody articles of white clothing, they told Meeker that "at night they would crawl up close to the soldiers, and, if they could, shoot them." Similarly, Price recalled how Ute warriors liked to brag about their abilities. Chief Johnson claimed that he had shot the official sent to rescue the women in the "forehead three times with his pistol, and then got off his pony and he went and pounded him in the head and smashed his skull in." Here, the cowardice portrayed involved confrontations with U.S. soldiers who, in the eyes of the captive women, were far superior when it came to fighting in a way the women considered fair and open. Their captors, however, were creeping about in the dark, waiting to attack when white soldiers had their backs turned, and bragging about doing

[34] Sharp, *History of Spirit Lake Massacre*, 217-221.

things like killing an official who came to negotiate or even bragging about defacing a corpse. The women saw no nobility in this type of violence and suggested Ute men were not real warriors nor even real men if that was their idea of prowess in battle.[35]

Sharp's derision for Native American styles of attack and guerilla warfare was also visible when focused the beginning portion of her narrative on depicting not only the attack on her own home, known as the Spirit Lake Massacre (1857), but several raids in neighboring areas. In one later ambush, Sharp wrote sarcastically that "the 'noble red men' had used stratagem to draw the whites from the house," the strategy being a ruse of friendship which had tricked those inside the house to come out unarmed only to be killed. Sharp both mocked Native American intellects, using the word "stratagem" to describe an ambush of unsuspecting people, mostly women and children. Doubly, she played with the concept of the "noble savage" as one who would pretend friendship to better kill and rob.[36]

Often, white children were casualties in these initial attacks, something women detailed frequently. Although young children were easier to adopt into indigenous cultures, they were also very hard to move quickly after a raid which led to many of them being killed upon initial attack. Kelly, in conversing with Boyeau, was told "many terrible stories." In one, raiding Yanktons killed an infant by "snatching it from its little bed, they thrust it into the heated oven, its screams torturing the wretched mother, who was immediately stabbed and cut in many pieces." Having killed the mother after forcing her to witness the nightmare of her own child being burned alive, they smashed the infant's head against the walls until it died. In giving the

[35] US Congress, Testimony in Relation to the Ute Indian Outbreak, 83; Meeker, *The Ute Massacre*, 38.
[36] Sharp, *History of Spirit Lake Massacre*, 95.

child an excruciating death and the mother a tortuous one, Kelly used the story to show the true depth of depravity which she believed only Native Americans could achieve.[37]

Of the great violence that captive women witnessed, Kelly suggested the only way to deal with it was to "live and endure." While some instances may have been exaggerated for effect on the audience, these women did witness a great deal of killing and brutality, essentially being civilians caught in a war of which neither themselves nor Native Americans really began. This does not however mean that the women were sympathetic towards their captors, and, in the end, did their utmost to villainize them. Leaning heavily on the genre's tradition of violence established in Colonial Era narratives, these women connected graphic and vivid imagery of torture, anguish, and mutilation to late nineteenth century Euro-American sentiments of assimilation, paternalism, and ethnocentrism towards indigenous peoples. [38]

Having established the character of their captors, women then emphasized their own resistance to them. Colonial Era captivity narratives were concerned with resistance towards assimilation into Native American society as scenes of adoption into tribes, like the running the gauntlet, marriage, or ceremonies making captives a member, were often portrayed as testaments of "savagery." The "distinctly gendered degradations and violence in captive situations," which captive women faced made their stories especially important to largely male authors who relied

[37] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 117. The theme of brutal deaths towards young children and the grief of their mother's witnessing it appears to have remained very much the same as in Colonial Era narratives. Both Hyde and Burnham suggest this was a part of building public sympathy and justification for retaliation. "Primal fear" of destruction of the next generation of "Americans" had a lasting place within the genre. *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 330-32. *Captivity and Sentiment*, 93. See Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008) for more on irrational fear of Native American attacks and the lasting effect on Euro-American mentality.

[38] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 25. It is worth noting that, while Euro-Americans- as well as scholars of captivity narratives like Sayre- viewed women in captivity as civilians at war, Native Americans likely considered women not as civilians but as combatants because of women's presence on Native lands. Martino's argument that women frequently took up arms in frontier settings helps further this point.

heavily on female Christianity and gentleness to show a resistance to "heathen savagery." Late nineteenth century narratives however largely dropped the idea of resistance through religion. With the increase in migration into the American West, women who were taken captive came from different religious and socio-economic backgrounds. Religion was no longer a unifying theme for these women, and they focused instead on mental relief at their return as well as physical appearance and dress.[39]

In writing of their own return to white society, women made sure to display just how joyful they were to return; to even mention having looked back could possibly suggest they had found something pleasant about their time with their captors. Kelly used the American flag as her symbol of freedom, recalling that she saw it flying over Ft. Sully as she approached, and how her "heart gave a wild bound of joy" upon seeing it. Having written of how numb and tired she felt by this point in her captivity, the symbol of her nation revived her. She continued writing that "something seemed to rise in my throat and choke my breathing. Everything was changed… all seemed to melt away like mist before the morning sunshine, when I beheld the precious emblem of liberty." Despite symbolizing a country in which she had no vote, the flag represented a return to society, a freedom from the being captive among savages; a civilized society where she had no rights was still better than a savage one where she had no free will.[40]

Interestingly, Sharp, who wrote about prayer and compared her own Christianity to the sinfulness of her captors, left spirituality out of her own return to society. After a long process of trade and travel, she was eventually exchanged in an official ceremony the transcript of which appears in her narrative. Leaving the description of her exchange to the transcript, Sharp rather

[39] Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 80-85; Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 94-145; Cathy Rex, "Revisiting the Nation: The Domesticated Nationalism of Ann Eliza Bleecker's *The History of Maria Kittle*," *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal 42*, 8 (2013): 958.
[40] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 209.

focused on her emotions during it, writing, "I was now free once more. No longer the slave of slaves in the camp of the Dakotas, but a free girl, tenderly cared for, in the rich and populous city." Again, the irony of being returned to a society where women had no real rights, was lost on Sharp as she wrote of being a free girl. Similarly, Sharp compared captivity to slavery. Not only was it a degrading state for a white girl to be a slave, but she furthered the analogy in saying she was a slave to slaves, subjected to the mastery of a race which she believed could not be its own master.[41]

Physical evidence of resistance to assimilation was also used by the women in their own narratives to prove that they remained, quite literally, white. To show this, women described their dress in captivity or at the time of their return to white society. Sharp, in writing of a fellow captive's return, claimed that the women "laid aside the habiliments of savagery and serfdom, donning the attire of freedom and civilization." Whereas their "primitive" captors failed to dawn the clothes of white society, returned captive women were able to easily slip out of the "savage" dress and back into white attire. The symbolism of apparel and the body's ability to wear is well or naturally was a way that the women proved their ability to remain "civilized" despite having spent long periods of time in indigenous society and even in the clothes of "savagery."[42]

During Sharp's captivity, Sioux women had "copiously oiled" her hair and covered her face and even the part of her hair with dark red paint to mask her fairer skin. On her return to "civilization," Sharp recalled vigorously washed "in 'dead earnest'" to "get rid of all traces of these monsters." Sharp viewed washing as more than removing oil from her hair and paint from

[41] Sharp, *History of Spirit Lake Massacre*, 265. In the epilogue of the 4th edition of Sharp's narrative, she confided that she spent many years being very hateful towards all Native people but found a way to forgive them after converting to a newly founded "Church of science." The religious elements which pepper her narrative may have been added on to editions following this conversion.
[42] Sharp, *History of Spirit Lake Massacre*, 192.

her face; she was washing away the cultural residue of the Sioux. Similarly desperate to be rid of her indigenous garb, Sharp "cut and made a full suit of clothing" for herself and claimed it was "worth everything" to her. At a fort on the journey to the point of exchange, two friendly half-Native American women offered Sharp beautifully trimmed moccasins for her aching feet, but she so abhorred any reminders of "Indians," she threw them out and went without footwear instead. Clean and visibly white again, dressed in "white clothes," Sharp felt as if she had completed the process of returning to "civilization."[43]

Visible whiteness also made an appearance in Kelly's narrative when she met Mary Boyeau. Almost not recognizing the other woman as white because of her Native American garments, Kelly wrote that she was "startled to behold a fair-faced, beautiful young girl sitting there, dejected and worn, like myself, but bearing the marks of loveliness and refinement, despite her neglected coverings." While it is unknown whether Boyeau ever had her own moment of release from captivity, at least at the point of Kelly's meeting her, she remained "fair-faced," lovely and refined. Her civil nature, in Kelly's description, made her Native American attire look shabby.[44]

Emphasizing that they had been forced to dress like their captors was one way of showing resistance to assimilation. Sharp had no choice when her clothes wore out; she wrote that her options were to wear buckskin clothes or go without clothes entirely, something which would have put her, in her mind, below her captors, which Sharp's pride could not allow. Kelly described her attire when she returned to Ft. Sully with a duality of torture and triumph. She wrote that she wore a "narrow white cotton gown, composed of only two breadths, reaching

[43] Sharp, *History of Spirit Lake Massacre*, 249-250. Grudgingly, Sharp admitted that buckskin clothing and Native American clothes in general were more suited to the terrain of the West.
[44] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 113.

below the knee, and fastened at the waist with a red scarf." Remarkably, even after about six months in captivity, Kelly was able to maintain a white garment of clothing. Continuing, she wrote that, "moccasins, embroidered with beads and porcupine quills, covered my feet, and a robe over my shoulders completed my wardrobe." Kelly claimed the moccasins were considered of high value to her captors who had gifted them to her as an indication of their favor for her. Not only was she returning to society with a white dress on, but she was adorned the finery of the Sioux, leading a group of her captors into the fort like a conquering queen. That morning, she had scrubbed her face as, like Sharp, Kelly had been forcefully painted by Ogalalla women. Not all her wardrobe was triumphant however as Kelly wrote of being forced to wear tight brass rings on her arms which "lacerated" her and left permanent scars. These garments, to Kelly were like the clothes Sharp was happy to shed, garments which bound the women to Native people. Further, they left permanent scars on Kelly a reminder of the traumas she had endured and survived but not without lasting effect.[45]

Women sometimes included cautious tales about white people, men, and women, who had been assimilated into these exotic Native American cultures. Just before her release, Kelly met a "gentlemanly looking well-mannered gentlemen" whom she learned was an ex-Southerner with Confederate sympathies. He had been willingly living among the Sioux for over fourteen years as a "mountain man," married a Sioux woman, and had children. Seeing how proud he was of his life, Kelly knew she could not trust anyone who voluntarily turned away from white society. Further, captivity narratives were "intuitively connected to the process of nation building" and thus have always been inherently political. Kelly was taken captive during the last months of the Civil War, and, when asked if the South had won yet, she did not know. This did

[45] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 204.

not stop her from responding that the South never would. Writing her narrative later during the Reconstruction Era, Kelly may have added the character of the "Confederate Indian-lover" as a political statement on the type of man who would choose to live among the whites, a rebel and traitor to his nation.[46]

In another incident, Kelly met the white wife of a Sioux man named Black Bear. She had been taken from a wagon train inflicted with cholera and since "forgot her own language, her name, and everything about her past life, but she knew she was white." This knowledge of her own whiteness allowed Kelly to accept the woman as more of a friend than the mountain man, but admitted she never confided in the woman. Although Black Bear's wife had been taken at a young age and could not be entirely blamed for assimilating into indigenous society, Kelly felt there was a divide between her and the other woman who had forgotten everything about white society except for her obvious skin tone.[47]

These examples of white people who were drawn into the exotic and increasingly romanticized indigenous societies served to remind the audience that not all were strong enough to resist assimilation. Women who self-authored their own narratives perhaps used this, in conjunction with rejection of Native American attire, to remind the audience of their own strength. Not only were they still "American" in mind, but they were morally tough and uncorrupted despite living in proximity with Native people. Their self-proclaimed physical and moral fortitude, combined with their joy at return, made these women believe that they deserved to return to white society and not only be embraced by it, but upheld for what the trial which they had gone through and survived without caving to temptations of a "savage" lifestyle.

[46] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 205-06. Rex, "Revising the Nation," 956-57.
[47] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 138-39.

For a variety of different reasons, returned female captives seemed compelled to reinforce the primitive and violent aspects of the Savage Myth. Borrowing from themes established in the genre during the Colonial Era, captive women made savagery one of the main focal points of their narratives, speaking with authority and finality on what they felt was the "true nature" of not only the tribe that held them captive but Native Americans as a collective people. With this perceived authority, women like Fanny Kelly, Josephine and Arivella Meeker, Sophrina Price, Abbie Gardner Sharp, and so many more proclaimed their captors to be primitive in habits, beliefs, and mind. Further, trapped within the confines of their "undeveloped" minds, Native peoples were unrepentantly violent and relished killing white people, particularly women and children, almost as much as they supposedly enjoyed sucking the blood of a freshly killed buffalo.

Women had everything to gain from perpetuating this trope. In showing open revulsion and condemnation at being forced to reside with Native Americans, women were able to create a public image of white women who remained strong despite great trials. Controlling the public's perception of their stories likely helped ease women's reentry into white society by connecting them with a national identity and popular Euro-American sentiments towards Native peoples. Women also likely felt some sense of justice in their narratives being used as justification for the suppression of Native peoples, some of whom had, for a time, served as women's captors, tormentors, and often the killers of their families and friends. Finally, in writing narratives which damned their indigenous captors, uplifted themselves, and spared no detail concerning the damage and trauma they suffered, women built a ground upon which they could seek financial independence after captivity, whether that be in the form of a Congressional bill for reparations, book sales, public appearances, or even jobs as consultants to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Women who seized the opportunity to share their stories were also seizing an opportunity to secure a life for themselves after captivity.

Participating in Imperial Systems

By the time Abbie Gardner Sharp was rescued from captivity, word had spread "like fire over the prairie" of the Spirit Lake Massacre, her time among the Sioux, and her rescue. Her return attracted large crowds of people eager to see or even touch a survivor of captivity. At one stop along her return journey to Fort Ridley, "our coming was known, and crowds and deafening shouts from the people greeted the approach of our boat." At another town, "there was a crowd gathered on the boat and dock, and so great was the sympathy that a purse of thirty dollars was raised for me in a few minutes." One night, she and her military escort stayed with the Bee family overnight. Upon departure, "many valuable presents were made me," and Mrs. Bee, gave Sharp a "purse containing several dollars in gold, and a beautiful gold ring." It was in St. Paul, however, that Sharp received her largest gift yet. The people of the town, who had previously hosted one of Sharp's fellow captives, Mrs. Marble, raised five hundred dollars; they had gathered one thousand dollars for Marble just weeks earlier. With pride and self-importance, Sharp wrote that she and Marble both "deposited in one of the St. Paul banks subject to our order, drawing interest at three percent a month."[1]

Sharp's rhetoric when she wrote about her own bank account, under her name and under her order alone, was one of pride. In fact, she catalogued each gift, monetary or other, with a certain reverence. Financial independence was likely something Sharp, like many other young women at the time, never thought she would ever have. Moreover, she likely never thought that

[1] Abigail Gardner Sharp, *History of Spirit Lake Massacre and Captivity of Miss Abbie Gardner*, 4th ed. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa Printing Co., 1902), 257-59, 266.

society would enable her, a young female, to live independently. This was a special circumstance, however, even so, Sharp's financial gain came at some cost. Some women taken into captivity were taken during Native American attacks which had killed their families and close acquaintances. Many more had migrated west, following their husbands, and leaving family back home. These individuals returned to a world where they had no male provider. Others returned with visible scars or tattoos which marked them both as oddities and commodities, both captivating and repulsive to the public. Many complained of physical and mental ailments that made it difficult for them to fit back into white society or to hold the few jobs that were acceptable for women at the end of the nineteenth century. Socially isolated, physically separated, and coping with traumas, captive white women found themselves alone and perhaps a little bit lost.[1]

Despite their difficult situation, these women were not defenseless, and many managed to do very well for themselves. A few recognized the valuable and lucrative opportunity to use both their voice to "educate" the public on Native American culture and character while also making money off the sale of multiple editions of their narratives. There were those who returned to find that the public had a great interest in them and that touring, making public speeches, and doing

[1] June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 2-3, 267. Namias characterized white female captivity throughout time as a "separation from one's community, a loss of spouse and children" as well as a story of women "out of place, surviving in a world not of their own making." The concept of female survivance in an environment which they did not choose nor create reaches beyond time spent in forced proximity with indigenous captors and connects to women's place in Euro-American society. The most famous case of visible tattooing as well as mental health issues was Olive Oatman. There is photographic evidence of her chin tattoo received in captivity as well as physician's letters describing an incurable eye condition and depression later in life. Her tattoo made her a public curiosity, and it is known that her husband asked her to cover it with makeup and forbade her from public appearances where she spoke on her experiences. As the Oatman narrative is known to be heavily edited and that her speeches were written for her by the same man who altered her story, her narrative is often used as an example of the decline of captivity narratives into pure fiction which scholars like Anne F. Hyde and Gordon M. Sayre claim makes the study of 19th century captivity pointless. For more on Oatman, see Margot Mifflin, *The Blue Tattoo: The Life of Olive Oatman* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

interviews brought in donations from a sympathetic public. While there was assuredly a novelty in having the public value their voices, publications and public appearances were not always a reliable source of income. As many of the women who wrote out long narratives attested, writing a book was hard work, and although donations helped, one could not expect the "sympathy" of the crowd to provide a steady income from that source.

Congressional documents from 1865 to 1920, reveal where many female captives went to find a more lucrative, long lasting, and immediate solution to their financial instability. In something rarely discussed in published narratives and scholarship, women returning from captivity could petition Congress to ask for "private relief" for their experiences. Armed with character testimonies, witness accounts, and even letters from various official organizations, military supporters, and government officials, these women went to court to request reparations and often left with a guaranteed income for many years to come. Not only were these women wealthy and able to pursue their own interests, but in going to court to report crimes committed by Native Americans against whites, they played a pivotal role in the suppression of indigenous people in the overarching story of American imperialism and nation building.[2]

Kelly, in the closing chapters of her narrative, mentioned that she found it difficult to bring herself back from captivity as memories of the experience "preyed" upon her mind. She wrote, "I was ill at ease among my new friends, and they told me that my eyes wore a strangely

[2] Almost none of the major published captivity narratives mentioned suing for reparations. It was only briefly noted in newspaper articles which were often vague about the facts relating to the petition and reward, generally only insinuating women were taken as wards of the state or given money by Congress because of good looks and sympathy. Women may have been reluctant to share details about activity seeking money to maintain their image as helpless victims. This coincides with Michelle Burnham's examination on the appeal of captivity experiences leans heavily on the concept of sentiment and that it was imperative for authors of narratives to maintain public sympathy to maintain sales. See *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997).

wild expression, like those of a person constantly in dread of some unknown alarm." It was not uncommon for women returned from captive experiences to remark that they were mentally and physically unwell for a long while after. Sharp claimed she never recovered from the injuries inflicted upon her during captivity but rather, "instead of outgrowing them," she wrote that "they have grown upon me as the years went by, and utterly dominated my health. Fourteen years after her experience, Sharp wrote she was still an "invalid confined to my own room." Josephine Meeker passed away just three years after her return, and her mother, Arivella D. Meeker, was permanently crippled from being forced by the Utes to ride astride a horse despite a broken hip.[3]

Such crippling mental and physical ailments made it difficult for some women to start writing a full narrative. Not only was the transition back to white society difficult for many, but the women had to work around everyday life problems. Kelly opened her narrative by apologizing for taking so long to get it published. She wrote it "from memoranda, kept during the period of my captivity, I had completed the work for publication, when the manuscript was purloined and published." Compelled to try again to correct false reports made in accounts about her, Kelly, "after surmounting many obstacles," finally self-published her work just under a decade after captivity.[4]

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[3] Fanny Kelly, *My Captivity: A Pioneer Woman's Story of her Life Among the Sioux* (Toronto: Maclear, 1872), 212. Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*, 280-81; US Congress, Mrs. Arivella Meeker, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902, H. Rep. 1662, 2-3; US Congress, Senate & House. Chap. 791. Cong. Stat. 57th Cong., 1st sess. (May 15, 1902), 1388. From https://congressional-proquest-com.proxy.library.kent.edu/congressional/search/basic/basicsearch#500/. The origins of Arivella Meeker's injuries become more convoluted as time progressed. In the earliest dated documents, the official court testimonies for the Ute Massacre, Josephine stated that her mother had been "lame" before the attack and only became worse from sleeping outside and riding horses without saddles. In Josephine's book, published the same year as the events of their captivity, Mrs. Meeker is said to have taken a bullet to the thigh which caused her to go lame. By 1902, several decades later, Senate Reports claimed Mrs. Meeker's hip was broken by Utes at some point in her captivity. For the purposes of this paper, her 1902 claim will be used as that is what she was rewarded money for.

[4] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 6. Most women made comments about writing to correct false information which had been published about them. Scholars like Mifflin and Dee Brown usually attribute this to public speculations about white women's willing participation in sexual relationship with indigenous men during captivity.

Sharp too faced many everyday issues. In an interview given to the *Omaha Daily Bee* in 1884, Sharp declared her intention to self-publish a manuscript to correct errors that had been reported about her time with an outlaw Sioux band, but she also vowed to reveal the falsehood of the story of the "tender Pocahontas." Married shortly after, Sharp began writing only to have her new home burned down along with the incomplete document and memorabilia from her time with the Sioux. Several years later, Sharp's newly rewritten narrative was also destroyed in another house fire. Sharp's little nest egg in the St. Paul bank was also lost in the financial crisis of 1857, leaving her without the personal account and funds which she had cherished so much. For several years, Sharp also spent time in and out of court attempting to gain ownership of her father's house at Spirit Lake as well as serving as a public activist in support of building a monument to those lost and taken during the Spirit Lake Massacre. She also began to give public lectures to raise money for publication of her narrative which was finally published in 1885.[5]

Getting a large work published, often years after newspapers, fiction novelists, and artists had already offered their renditions of the captivity, was no easy task. These women not only worked against their own physical handicaps as well as tragedies of daily life, but they pushed against gender boundaries set upon them by society. Although pardoned for many things due to their captivity experience, female self-publication in literature was still difficult and expensive especially for women who commonly stated "correction of inaccuracies" as their rationale for taking up such a project and were likely not welcoming to outsiders dictating or changing their

[5] "Mrs. Abbie Gardner Sharp: A Thrilling Story of Her Indian Captivity in the Spirit Lake Massacre in 1857." *Omaha Daily Bee* (Omaha, NE), Nov. 19, 1884; Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*, 278, 310. The fourth edition of Sharp's book was used for this paper. In it, she mentioned that she had sold over 3,000 copies by 1902. While many of these copies for forcefully sold on reservation visits, something Sharp admits to in the afterward, Brown that self-published narratives which were popular enough to have multiple printings brought in enough revenue to cover initial publication costs as well as sustain the women for the rest of their lives. See Dee Brown's *The Gentle Tamers: Women of the Old Wild West* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1981), 18-19.

story. Moreover, they appeared to have an overwhelming desire to prove the veracity of their story and Meeker, Sharp, and Kelly all include various testimonies by military officials as well as court documents throughout their narratives, something that each woman mentioned having had to collect themselves.[6]

For many returned female captives who either did not have the means or the desire to undertake such a project, there was another way to gain income and independence. They took their cases to court, suing for compensation in the form of an allowance or annuity. This appears to have been the case with the Germain sisters. In an 1874 attack, the four girls were "rendered destitute and their natural supporters and guardians were murdered by Cheyenne Indians." After their return, all four gave multiple interviews detailing the horrors of seeing their parents attacked and killed as well as the ill-treatment they had received during their seven months of captivity. The public immediately became enamored with the tragic story of the four young women who had witnessed and survived the "horrors of Indian captivity." Reprints of their story ran periodically in newspapers across the country for decades after, yet not one of the girls wrote their own narrative.[7]

A 1904 newspaper article offers insight into what the Germain women did after their return, after all the interviews were over and they realized that they were four unmarried and orphaned young women. The girls first began by having various military officials advocate on

[6] Fiction novelists and playwrights at the time appear to have waited for women to return from captivity to publish a version of the experience. There are multiple newspapers from 1865 to 1902 announcing an author's intentions to base a novel off a captive's story. More dangerous perhaps were "false friends," as Kelly referred to them. Kelly was not the only woman to share her story with someone only for them to sell a parody of the story to publishers.
[7] US Congress, Catharine and Sophia Germain, 44th Cong., 1st sess., 1876, Ex. Doc. 59, 2-3; "The Germain Family," *The Indian Advocate (*Sacred Heart, OK), 1904. This is a publication which was sympathetic to Native Americans. The details on how the Germain girls were compensated stated that justice had been served whereas letters in the Congressional petition suggest that the government could never make the situation right. The author was also careful to note that the Cheyenne did not commit the only "atrocities" and recounted an 1875 retaliatory raid by a group of Texans who beheaded five Comanche who had not been involved with the Germain incident and preserved their heads in alcohol.

their behalf to Congress. According to one letter, written by Colonel Nelson A. Miles, the girls were made destitute by "hostile Indians" and should therefore be provided for by the government with daily rations to start. More than that, Miles suggested that as "they were rescued during active operations, it would seem that they are entitled to the same considerations as prisoners of war pending action of the Government in their case." All four Germains were initially given rations and medical support, but they were eventually awarded an allowance as well as a complete house outside Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in which they could live in by themselves. Miles assumed formal guardianship of the two youngest sisters, but, largely, the Germains were independent without any sort of male authority. The older sisters were given control of the allowance; a personal bill issued by the 45th Congress on March 1, 1879, recorded their first payment with Catherine and Sophia Germain each receiving $2,500. The bill stated that they would each continue to receive their repayments at a rate of five percent of the total sum per year until they turned twenty-one at which point, they would receive the rest.[8]

Unlike many of the other petitioners, the Germains were treated as prisoners of war which likely led to their reward of stipend and property. Land was generally an award made solely to men at this time, so it is unusual that title was granted to four unmarried young women. This might be explained by examining the scholarship of Laurel Clark Shire who, in her monograph *The Threshold of Manifest Destiny*, examines the willingness of federal and state governments to allot property to women in the case of "Indian Depredations" on the Florida frontier. In her research, Shire suggested that men were agreeable to white women owning land if it helped displace Native people and outnumber African American slaves. Women who sued

[8] US Congress, Catharine and Sophia Germain, 2; "The Germain Family," *The Indian Advocate;* US Congress, Senate & House. Chap. 128. Cong. Stat. 45th Cong., 3rd sess. (March 1, 1879), 603. From https://congressional-proquest-com.proxy.library.kent.edu/congressional/search/basic/basicsearch#500. The personal bill also notes that, should the girls die without "issue" or children to inherit, the money would revert to the United States.

for welfare in court were granted rations and support to rebuild homes but only if they continued to live on the Florida frontier. It appears, then, that Congress modeled its dealings with the Germain case after earlier Florida depredations settlements. The Germains had been taken as a part of an ongoing military campaign against the Cheyenne over land disputes in Kansas; the girls were given land around a frontier fort to help settle the territory taken after those campaigns. They were seen as four young women who would likely marry and help "tame" the land.[9]

Another orphan returned from captivity among the "Bandito tribe of Indians in Northern Idaho," Jessie Lacomber, married one of the men who was a part of the expedition sent to retrieve her. It would be easy to assume that Lacomber only sought support through marriage and, after several years in captivity and faced with the prospect of returning to nothing, conveniently married one of the first white men she encountered upon her return. In her 1888 interview with a reporter from *The Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, Lacomber revealed this was not quite the case. She did not marry her husband until sometime after her return. When asked how she supported herself during the time between return and matrimony, Lacomber was evasive. She only shared that "she had travelled at ease, being a ward of the Government and well provided for." The reporter suggested to the reader that her refusal to be clear about how much money she received, combined with the fashionable clothing and travel accommodations despite her husband's military salary, left an "impression that Uncle Sam has been rather more generous

[9] Laurel Clark Shire, *The Threshold of Manifest Destiny: Gender and National Expansion in Florida* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 52-53, 137-38, 140. The concept of female reproductivity plays into what Henry Nash Smith referred to as the "Garden of the World" or the agricultural dream which settlement of the American West would make a reality. Although Smith confines women to fiction novels in his own work, the idea of female fertility and "frontier fertility" appear complimentary to early Indian Depredation policy. See Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 123-24, 174.

with her than with other wards." By the time she married, she was a wealthy and relatively independent woman who did not need to desperately wed a low-ranking military soldier.[10]

A more well documented court case is Fanny Kelly's. The end of her narrative focused largely on her reunion with her husband and a poetic retelling of her adopted daughter's death. After being reunited, Kelly followed her husband further south to settle in Kansas where they met several misfortunes including raids by various Native groups and, eventually the rapid decline of her husband's health and his sudden death. For a time, Kelly was able to live off what her husband had left her and published her narrative in 1871. Rather than wait for book sales to bring in money, Kelly took further action. She hired a lawyer to take her case to Federal court, and Senate Report 79 was presented to Congress on March 22, 1872. It detailed the events of her capture in 1864, her time in captivity, her return in 1865 for which she was credited for having saved Fort Laramie, and, finally, a list of the goods which she and her husband had possessed at the time of attack.[11]

Newspapers reported that the Senate awarded her an allowance of $5,000 for her bravery, good deeds, and losses during her captivity. What losses were being compensated is where the matter becomes murky, and a new side to these petitions for government support is revealed. Kelly reported to *The Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* in 1883 that she had received payment for the loss of her adopted daughter who had been killed and presumably scalped by the Sioux.

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[10] "An Indian Captive: A Romance More Thrilling than Vagaries of Dime Novels," *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* (Wheeling, WV), Dec. 21, 1888. The article plays up the romantic element if it is not clear from the headline about a romance for the ages. While this part was clearly emphasized to sell copies, there is truth in the fact that Lacomber did not need to marry, nor did she need to marry an unmoneyed man given the support she was receiving from the government. There do not appear to be any personal bills appearing in the Congressional Acts around the time of her release, and, as the article references her being a ward of the state, this may have been an instance where the state was able and willing to pay the sum of her annuities.

[11] US Congress, In the Senate of the United States, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., 1872. S. Report 79. The report notes that she did draw the list from memory, but, considering various reference reports which are not included with the report itself, the petition stated that she has proved herself to be a reliable woman.

However, in her petition to Congress, her daughter was not mentioned. In a personal bill issued in June of 1872 by the 42nd Congress, Kelly received her first payment of $10,000 for "property taken and destroyed." The material goods which Kelly, in her own narrative, shrugged off as nothing, were not the basis of her reparations claim. She had provided a highly detailed list of her material possessions but never sought punishment nor reparation for her daughter's death.[12]

Abbie Gardner Sharp's case was, in many ways, much like Kelly's. Her self-written narrative, *The History of the Spirit Lake Massacre and Captivity of Miss Abbie Gardner*, was published in 1885. Like Kelly's book, hers went through several reprintings and was a bestseller. Sharp went to court in 1888 with a petition for reparation and a detailed list of valuables which had been destroyed. She valued her damaged health at $3,000, the value of her father's lands at $5,000, with additional value-added for various animals, farming equipment, and miscellaneous household goods. In all, her total claim was for $10,630. Congress found this an accurate estimate and rewarded her a $2,630 yearly allowance until that sum had been paid off.[13]

A more complex example of women suing for compensation and allowance can be found in the Ute attack at the White River Reservation in Colorado. Trials of the Ute leaders held responsible for the attack and captivity took place in 1884, largely based on the testimony of Josephine Meeker. By the end of the trials, there were a total of ten white claimants sought reparations for either the loss of loved ones or personal damages; four of these were women. Josephine Meeker was rewarded $460.00, Mrs. Arivella Meeker $788.85, and the last captive,

[12] "On the Plains in '65: By Sergeant Holliday," *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* (Wheeling, VA), June 25, 1883; US Congress, Senate & House. Chap. 314. Cong. Stat. 42nd Cong., 2nd sess. (1872), 675-76. From https://congressional-proquest-com.proxy.library.kent.edu/congressional/search/basic/basicsearch#500. In looking at listed reparations claims from 1865 to 1920, it was most common to sue for the loss of an individual, so it seems more significant here that Kelly did not.

[13] US Congress, House, Abbie Sharp, Formerly Abbie Gardner," 50th Cong., 1st sess., 1888, Report 1149, 1-2. No Congressional Act has been found to show when Sharp first received payments, and she did not address it in the 1902 printing which was used for this project.

Mrs. Sophrinia E. Price received $701.50. All three women would receive this money as an annual allowance of $500 per year for twenty years. The report admitted that estimation of repayments had largely been dictated by claimants, but "on account of the peculiar hardships connected with these cases, it is believed that ample provision should be made for the payment of claims." A personal bill in the 1884 Congressional Acts shows first payments of $460 to Josephine Meeker, $778.85 to Arivella Meeker, and $701.50 to Sophrina Price.[14]

Unfortunately for Josephine Meeker, she passed away from causes believed to be related to her time in captivity just three years after being awarded her allowance and only two years after publishing her narrative; she never got to see the full fruition of financial independence. By 1902, her mother's period of allowance was coming to an end. Having enjoyed almost twenty years of being provided for and never having to remarry, Arivella Meeker, at age 87, went back to court requesting a renewal to her payments. The grounds for her argument lay in her daughter's death. Josephine was never able to receive full compensation, and Arivella believed that money was still owed to at least her aging and crippled mother. She was not the only one who felt this way; among the petitions for renewal, the Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs, on behalf of its over 1,500 members, requested the reinstatement of Mrs. Meeker's "pension." Congress agreed, and House Report 1662, stated that she would see renewal of her allowance of $500 per year until her death. Officially, in the personal bill issued in 1902 by the 57th Congress, this renewal was in "recognition of her husband" rather than the petition's request for Arivella to receive the remainder of her daughter's annuities.[15]

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[14] US Congress, Claims for Depredations Committed by the Ute Indians, 48th Cong., 1st sess., 1884, H. Rep. 693. 2-3; US Congress, Sarah R. Dresser, 54th Cong., 2nd sess., 1897, H. Rep. 2666; US Congress, Chap. 128, 96.

[15] US Congress, Mrs. Arivella D. Meeker, 1-3, 7. It is not entirely clear how money from publication of Josephine's narrative was dealt with. The narrative includes not only her own story, but it also her mother's version as well as Price's. Although Josephine is the only listed author, there is a chance the other two women received partial income from book sales, and one must wonder if her mother became the beneficiary of her daughter's narrative

It might seem unusual that a woman could go to court seventeen years after her daughter's death and try to claim her money. It seems stranger that Congress would wait over twenty years to offer a personal bill under the reasoning of her husband's death when most of the initial claimants involved in the White River Massacre trial were widowed spouses. It might also seem strange that both Kelly and Sharp were allotted such large sums of money for property loss based on a list each woman constructed from memory years after the events surrounding captivity and which the court chose to trust. However, within the context of legislation of Indian Depredation claims which returned captives were suing under, it makes more sense. In a report from the Board of the Indian Commissioners, presented to Congress in 1893 and detailing the history of this legislation, claimants could cite almost any reason for their petition. Among the list of reasons for depredation claims there was "loss of husbands, wives, slaves, steamboats, mills, gold coin, Bank of England notes, dwelling houses, fences, a head of hair, a sky-blue horse, a mouse-colored mule, stock of all kinds, machinery, household goods." According to the report, "nearly everything produced by nature or art during the century of our nation's progress" had been cited in claims for Indian Depredations.

It was up to the Secretary of the Interior to decide if these annumerated reasons were worth presenting to the Court of Claims. From 1865 to 1893, a total of 9,706 depredation claims were presented to Congress for review with claimants requesting a total of $37,533,374.15 in damages. It appears that the various Secretaries of the Interior during this period felt that many claims were compelling enough to be brought to court, although commissioners would later complain that it was "onerous and exacting" work to investigate claims before pushing them forward for review. A captivity or loss of family members resulting from Native American

after her death. She made no mention of an alternative income in any of her petitions, but neither did any of the other women who went to court for reparations.

attacks would have made it easy for returned women to seek Congressional support. It also explains why these women were so comfortable demanding large sums of money.[16]

These court cases allow historians to trace government spending and reveals what was important to the government at this point in history. The government was, by all appearances, awarding money freely for anyone who came forward and filed a claim against Native Americans. They were particularly willing to give large sums of money to single women who had returned from captivity, especially those who were vocal about their negative experiences at the hands of their captors. One could say that the government was simply placing a higher value on women during this time, a value represented by the large sums of money awarded to them by Congress in these reports. However, with the end of the Civil War, a period where pensions and reparations were awarded frequently makes it seem less likely that society was re-evaluating women as more importance to society. If women were becoming more important, it would only be in the context of colonization and expansion into the West; they were essentially of use in "breeding out" the Native peoples and being gentle, civilizing forces.[17]

However, as Shire suggests, these sorts of welfare cases over Indian captivities and depredations show women as active agents of colonialism. In speaking of the settlement of Florida, Shire wrote that money awarded to women reveals that "American social spending also required recipients to serve expansionist roles, roles that required them to participate in the

[16] L.W. Colby, "Indian Depredations Claims," In Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners (1893),81-82; Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, vol. 2 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 720-21. Prucha's interpretation of the Indian Depredations Act was that it was "an example of time-consuming work carried on in the Indian Office that had little direct bearing on normal Indian policy or administrations. Only devoting a couple paragraphs of his voluminous work to it, Prucha did not see depredations claims playing a part in the larger picture of white and indigenous relations.

[17] For more on the rising trends in pensions, see Theda Skocpol's *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). Brown and his contemporaries, Sandra L. Myres and Julie Roy Jeffrey, all suggest that women were expectedly to bring "civilization" to the West through creation of a domestic sphere; they were expected to make a home by bearing children and counteracting their husband's more aggressive manners with their own gentle natures.

dispossession of Native Americans from their land and the expansion of social slavery." The suggestion that these women were not simply suing to gain their own freedom but were purposefully or inadvertently playing into the imperial system to suppress Native Americans leads back to the legislation which these women were utilizing. [18]

The funds listed in these reports are significant not because of who they were given to but who the money was taken from to pay the claims. Many of the Congressional petitions pointed at two entities to blame for the captivities: the federal government and the tribe held responsible for the attack and capture. Cases of depredations, which captivity experiences were generally considered, fell under the legislative purview of Indian Depredations Claims Act, a piece of legislation which was first passed in 1796 and was periodically updated until 1891 when the most recent, updated act was passed. Officially, claimants sued "against the United States, and against the tribe of Indians committing the wrong." While captive women were technically suing the government, they were really pursuing a case against the tribe that had taken them captive. This leads to the question of payment: which of the two entities listed as defendants were expected to pay and who really did? In almost every case, it was expected that "the amount of any judgement so rendered against any tribe of Indians shall be charged against the tribe." Payments were extracted in several different ways which were illustrated in returned captives' petitions and personal bills.[19]

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[18] Shire, *The Threshold of Manifest Destiny*, 140. Margaret D. Jacobs and Patricia Y. Stallard both address this concept as well. Jacobs "Maternal Colonialism (2005)" points to female participation in Indian education and removal policies whereas Stallard's *Glittering Misery* (1978) briefly opens the discussion on military wives who acted as their husband's political promoters while the men were fighting against Native Americans.

[19] Colby, "Indian Depredations Claims," 80-81; US Congress, Senate & House. Chap. 538. Cong. Act. 51st Cong., 2nd sess. (March 3, 1891), 853. From https://congressional-proquest-com.proxy.library.kent.edu/congressional/search/basic/basicsearch#500. According to the 1893 Board of Indian Commissioners report on this legislation, cases could only be brought to court against tribes which the United States had treaties against. Some women may have sought only state level support if the tribes they were held by

In the case of the Germain sisters, the government paid for all four of the girls' daily rations from their return from captivity in 1874 until their first payment in 1879. However, when it came to paying their yearly allowance, it was suggested that "moderate provision be made for them out of the money appropriated for the subsistence of the Indians who reduced them to such a state." In the personal bill issued to Sophia and Catherine Germain, the girls were to each receive five percent annually from a portion of "annuities due to the Cheyenne." Further, the *Indian Advocate* in 1904, an indigenous run periodical, claimed Congress "authorized the stoppage of the amount sufficient for the support of the children from the annuities of their captors, the Southern Cheyenne."[20]

Similarly, Kelly's report also suggested where the government should find the funds to help her. Towards the bottom of the report, there is mention of several documents which were included in the petition, most of which were letter of testimony to Kelly's character and struggles. There is a mention of a petition from various Sioux chiefs offering to pay for Kelly's captivity which is not included in the published report. However, the phrasing clues the reader in to the willingness of the chiefs in offering this sum. The report reads that these letters were signed "in the presence" of various Sioux leaders testifying that they had taken Kelly as captive, and, as apology, they wanted her yearly allowance to come from money which was allotted to their reservation. The report claims that the tribal leaders had been read the report, and that they had been present at its signing. Tribal leaders may have been read the report and there at its signing, but that does not in any way mean that they had understood what was read to them, does not mean they endorsed it, and does not mean that it was in any way their idea to take funds

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did not have a treaty with the United States, particularly women who may have been taken by First Nations tribes. This is something that requires further research which is beyond the bounds of this project currently.

[20] US Congress, Catherine & Sophia Germain, 2-3; "The Germain Family," *The Indian* Advocate; US Congress, Chap. 128, 603. Nothing in either report or newspaper article mentions where funds for the house came from.

away from their poverty-stricken reservations to pay off a woman whom they had considered one of them.[21]

Similarly, Sharp's petition for reparations includes debate, however small, on who should pay. Sharp specified that she felt funds should be taken from Sioux reservation funds. However, the report included a letter from an official of the Department of the Interior. It stated that, while recognizing all that Sharp had suffered, the court must consider that the group who took her had been rebel outlaws and not recognized by the rest of the Sioux tribes; he concluded that it would be unfair to make the Sioux pay for something they condemned and had no part of. Interestingly, the report stated that it acknowledged the truth of this, but, seeing that there was no way of forcing the outlaws to pay, the money was still to be taken out of Sioux funds. The only amendment made was that Kelly's case was being shifted from the Department of the Interior to the Secretary of Treasury, a change which changed nothing really for the Sioux being held responsible. Although it was not perhaps Sharp's intention for this to happen, in asking for an allowance to be given her, she enabled the government to abuse its power and further cripple the Sioux nation.[22]

These three women reflect the typical and perhaps ideal enforcement of the Indian Depredations Act. A tribe which the government had a treaty with, although it may not have encompassed all bands of that tribe, was blamed for the women's losses and captivity. Both Kelly and Sharp's petitions make a major flaw in this system apparent, however. Although not in her petition, Sharp's narrative also mentions that the Inkadaputa's band which she had been

[21] US Senate, In the Senate of the United States. No media reports were made on either the signing or where the funds were being drawn from.

[22] US Congress, Abbie Sharp, Formerly Abbie Gardner, 3. Considering the events of Little Big Horn and Wounded Knee, the government was probably even less inclined towards leniency with the Sioux. Sharp, from her rhetoric, likely had no problem with further crippling this group even if those who paid were not directly involved in her captivity.

taken by were "outlaws" not recognized by the greater part of the Sioux nation. It was this greater part of the Sioux that had signed treaties with the United States; the two bands which took Sharp and Kelly did not honor these treaties. It was instead the Sioux who did not do anything to break the treaty who were expected to pay "from annuities due said tribe from the United States." By the time Kelly's personal bill was issued in 1872, the legislation contained a clause which stated that tribes had to begin making payments within three years of Congressional decision. In a way the government was still paying the women, but it was also directing funds away from Native Americans living on reservations.[23]

Once again, a more involved case was the White River Massacre. Six Ute leaders were hung for the attacks on the Meekers and other whites living on the reservation as well as for atrocities committed against U.S. soldiers who were sent to stop the Utes. In addition to this punishment, ten claimants were granted annuities which were paid for from "funds belonging to the confederated bands of the Ute Indians." Given the previously mentioned cases, this was not out of the ordinary. However, the official testimonies given at the official trial offer context into why the Utes were punished so harshly and why the government took especial interest in this case.

Recurring throughout every testimony were similar questions regarding the Ute and a land sale dispute that had been an ongoing issue with the government since the late eighteenth century. This piece of land, according to the Congressional report, was also seized from the Utes

[23] Colby, "Indian Depredations Claims," 80-81; US Congress, Chap. 538, 853. Many studies have been done on reservation poverty which remains a large issue today. Richard White's *Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983) explores some of the poverty on reservations due to tribes being pushed onto lands which were not sustainable for agriculture nor were tribes allowed to continue with old trade practices which led to dependence on the U.S. government. Frederick E. Hoxie, in *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians 1880-1920* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), also brings up the move to end reservation systems because they were failing to further indigenous assimilation and often resulted in issues of poverty and unrest

as a part of their punishment. The Secretary of the Interior at the time, Carl Schurz, claimed "he saw no solution to the explosive situation other than to settle the Utes on allotments and open remaining lands to the whites." This was a highly contested step towards ending the reservation system, moving away from excessively violent punishment of Native Americans, and forwarding assimilation efforts. By holding a rebellious band of not recognized by the rest of the tribal group, the U.S. government placed blame on the entire Ute nation. In going to court and testifying, the Meeker women and Price participated in the seizure of a portion of land which the government had coveted for a long period of time. This same land was subsequently sold to white settlers.[24]

Further, the government held itself to blame for the incident, stating that "this massacre was directly due to the failure of the Government in not responding to the urgent entreaties of Mr. Meeker over a period of several months." Claiming some amount of responsibility, the government felt it was appropriate to pay for the allowances of the Meekers and Price. With this sentiment, "the government shall reimburse itself out of the enormous funds to be realized by these Indians from the sale of their lands." To clarify, the government took Ute lands, sold them to white settlers, and then, rather than give the money from the lands to the Ute reservation funds, Congress reimbursed itself for having paid reparations to the victims. In sum, the Ute paid for everything, and the government only took responsibility for the incident in word but not action.[25]

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[24] US Congress, Testimony in Relation to the Ute Indian Outbreak, Taken by the Committee of Indian Affairs of the House of Representatives, 46th Cong., 2nd sess., 1880, H. Misc. Doc. 38, 134-35; Prucha, *The Great Father*, 661-62; Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973), 335-342.

[25] US Congress, Mrs. Arivella D. Meeker, 2; US Congress, Claims for Depredations Committed by the Ute Indians, 1. Utley explores more into the failings of Nathanial Meeker as an Indian Agent and known socialist. In Josephine's narrative as well, the Utes tell her that their complaints were mainly with her father which she dismissed as a general indigenous mistrust of white men who promote agriculture.

The punishment was not over yet however. Former Indian Agent James B. Thompson testified that, by 1874, the Colorado Utes had a sum of six million dollars' worth of debt in various depredations claims even before the incident at the White River Agency. Even before their land was forcibly sold against their will, Ute reservation annuities were already being heavily drained by other claims against them. These funds would continue to be drained in the years to come. In the 1902 renewal of Arivella Meeker's allowance, the Utes were said to have "abundant funds" to cover her "meager" $500 annuity. Even after paying for the incident for twenty years, the Utes were expected to pay literally until Mrs. Meeker died.[26]

The handling of the White River Reservation case is also outlined in the literature on Indian Depredation legislation. Although the government was sending annuities to the to Ute reservations, it was likely not been enough to pay for all ten claims let alone cover all three of the captive women's claims for twenty years each. In the case where annuities funds were too low or only enough for the tribe's "necessary support, subsistence, and education," the government took money from any other funds due to the tribe, especially those "arising from the sale of their lands or otherwise." Criteria for what was considered the sustainable minimum amount for tribes to live on was not outlined in the legislation which likely led to some subjectivity on how little could be given to tribes. However, due to the clause on not taking annuities funds if they were essential for tribe survival, the government found another route of suppression through the sale of land. As executed so flawlessly in the case of the White River Massacre, the government was able to forcibly sell Ute lands and not only sell that property to whites but to keep the money from the sales by paying off depredations claims.[27]

[26] US Congress, Testimony in Relation to the Ute Indian Outbreak, 134-136; US Congress, Mrs. Arivella D. Meeker, 3.
[27] US Congress, Chap. 538, 853.

So, where did the money come from for these yearly allowances which enabled the Germain sisters to have their own house and for Jessie Lacomber to stay in a rich hotel and wear fancy travel clothes? The answer was often Native Americans living on reservations. Whatever tribes credited for the initial attack and any tribes involved with these women over the course of their captivity received the bill of reparation. This would seem natural; the tribe that killed the family and kidnapped the woman should have to make amends. The problem is that, while money was taken from reservation funds, the Native American groups attacking settlers and stealing women were generally those that refused to live on the reservations. The individuals who relied on government funding to live, those that tried to appease white government officials by living on reservations, paid the price. It becomes evident that the government was using this fact to continue pressuring Native Americans into submission while also stealing their land and withholding the support promised to many tribes at the signing of their treaties.[28]

Given the shifting legislation on Indian Depredations Act, an argument could be made that this only shows how women were used as pawns in the progress of United States imperialism, thus making captive women's actions more acceptable in white society. To maintain these women had no intentions of taking money from reservation annuities, ignores what those returned from captivity wrote about indigenous people. Many of them expressed strong racial sentiments about the inferiority of Native people as well as a resentment for the fact that the government paid annuities to reservations. Further, the women did not pretend ignorance to unsavory actions of white settlers and soldiers towards indigenous groups. Their words serve

[28] Hoxie addresses the appeal of assimilation and popular sentiments pushing for land allotments as one way to do so. See *A Final Promise*, 1-39.

as testimony to how actively these white women participated in the imperial "march of civilization."[29]

In looking at the three largest narratives, Kelly, Meeker, and Sharp's, racist sentiments frequently bleed into their characterization of their captors' actions. Sharp wrote that, upon her first contact with members of the Sioux, she found it "impossible to express my abhorrence for those repulsive and ferocious looking beings" who possessed a language composed of "jabbering and jargon." Both Kelly and Sharp remarked on the Sioux's fascination with white clothes despite their apparent inability to wear it properly. Sharp wrote that Ogallala Sioux women were "too broad-shouldered and brawny" to wear white women's clothing. Further, upon meeting some members of the Yankton tribe, she claimed they were the most primitive and wild natives she had ever seen and believed she was the first white person they had encountered. Their fascination with her reminded Sharp of how "civilized society" went to circuses to see oddities. Her characterization of the Sioux depicted primitive men and women who had not yet formed a language and was naturally repulsive to those of more civilized society. Further, her mention of circuses and the "grotesque" humor in watching her captors try on white clothes draws parallels to Wild West shows where Native Americans were often used for comedy and served as curiosities.[30]

Racism in these narratives was not directed towards all non-white groups equally, however. Kelly's narrative serves as an example of this and reveals great irony in her racist comments against her Sioux captors. On her journey from Kansas to Idaho in 1864, Kelly and her husband brought along two African American men who had been "slaves among the

[29] As seen in Chapter 2 of this text.
[30] Sharp, *The History of Spirit Lake Massacre*, 24-25, 149, 231. She never says she stopped hating Native Americans, just that she forgave them in a Christian sense and wanted to work towards bettering the youth although she believed Native Americans would never be equal to whites.

Cherokee" but were "faithful, trustworthy servants" to the Kelly's. One was killed in the Ogallala's attack while the other escaped; Kelly took time to grieve the former and rejoice at the latter's good fortune. Given her pride in apparently not being racist towards African Americans, there is great irony in her description of the Sioux. In a chapter devoted to Sioux custom and tradition, Kelly detailed their religion very thoroughly saying "superstition seems to have full sway among the Indians- just as much as in Heathen lands beyond the sea, where the Burmah mother casts her child to the crocodile to appease the Great Spirit." Where her early lamentations about the death of her servants seemed to place the Sioux below African Americans, this description rather draws parallels to "Darkest Africa" with the idea of comparing two similarly primitive, and thus inferior races. In this light, Kelly's racial characterizations appear to be driven by strong ethnocentrism. Popular sentiment that prolonged contact with white society could potentially "elevate" a "less-civilized people" perhaps influenced Kelly's depiction of her African American servants as above both Native Americans and Africans.[31]

More than simply reflecting the popular sentiments of the time, these women perhaps had a larger purpose for their narratives were touted by newspapers as "educational" volumes on the nature of the Native American. Both Meeker and Sharp even went on to give public lectures at educational institutions in the East. They perhaps felt that it was their duty to inform the public of the prospects of Native Peoples. Ethically, Kelly wrote that "red man" was guided by instinct and "for ages has his heart been imbedded in moral pollution." She looked to cast off "the stately Logan, the fearless Philip, the bold Black Hawk, the gentle Pocahantas," and to reveal that "those pictures of the children of the forest that adorn the pages of the novelist are delightful conceptions of airy fancy, fitted to charm the mind." Similarly, Sharp wrote about how so-called

[31] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 24-31, 141-42. Namias and Burnham both address the ethnocentrism as well as fascination of cultural meeting and blending within their scholarship. See *White Captives* and *Captivity and Sentiment*.

'Braves' have "long been celebrated and their names made famous by sickly sentimentalists." These were women writing in disgust as sentiments of sympathy and romanticization towards Native Americans increased in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In other words, restating the trope of the "violent savage" was less about public consumption than it was an indication of their commitment to racial superiority.[32]

Their disgust with the public's romanticization of Native Americans in literature and popular entertainment may also have connections to personal trauma. It is important to remember that, while captivity narratives often employ exaggerations, the fact that many of these captive women witnessed the death of their families and friends, and many were taken as a part of ongoing wars with the U.S. Government must also be acknowledged. Some, like Josephine and Aravella Meeker and Price, were raped, and returned to a society at a point in time where there was no support for this type of trauma. It would be fair to assume that there was a certain level of posttraumatic stress, and their disgust with a society that chose to forget what happened to them might also have embedded this racist mentality further.[33]

Given their deep convictions about the racial inferiority and warped ethics of Native Americans, it makes sense then that the women were emphatic in their belief that federal support

[32] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 187, 77-78; Sharp, *The History of Spirit Lake Massacre*, 107. Robert F. Berkhofer and Richard Slotkin discussed the popularity of "characters," both white and Native American, which developed from non-fiction accounts such as captivity narratives and war memoirs and became solidified within the cannon of fictional American literature. See Berkhofer's *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian From Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 25-32, 96-103 and Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Norman, Ok: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 94-115, 369-393.

[33]Kelly, *My Captivity*, 118. In an interview with another captive named Mary Boyeau, Kelly learned of a woman named Mrs. Dooley who, from witnessing the death of her five children and subsequent captivity, had "her reason dethroned." She was committed to a "lunatic asylum," and, interestingly, her husband was also committed sometime later. Given this information, there is a chance that many other women, and possibly men, returned from captivity and, unable to recover from the trauma, were committed to asylums thus never sharing their stories. It does not fit the limits of this paper, but a study on the impact of trauma on these women and how it may have further colored their opinions on captivity would be of interest.

for tribes was a waste of money and time. Josephine Meeker, in explaining the unrest of the Utes which led to their attack, wrote that a reservation worker, Mr. Price, "according to Government instructions, began ploughing up some ground for crops for the Indians." Despite breaking ground and doing labor for the Utes' benefit, the "savages" did not appreciate the effort as they believed that "as soon as the white men plough land it soon becomes his, and the red man loses it." Later, upon capture, the Meeker women and Mrs. Price were dragged through an irrigation ditch which had been made to help the Utes farm. It had been destroyed during the attack, and "the Indians seemed to take special delight in this display of their hatred and revenge, because this ditch was for agriculture, and they abominated it for that reason." Despite the government money and resources invested in the creation of the White River Reservation, not to mention the white labor done on behalf of the Utes, Josephine felt it was a waste; the Utes only expressed hatred and reacted with violence.[34]

Further, Josephine was keenly disappointed in the rejection of her efforts as a schoolteacher on the reservation. In her 1880 testimony, she said that the Utes often laughed at her for trying to teach their children, and others were angered by it. "They did not want any schools nor did they want any work," she said. It is this rejection of labor and education that led her to say that Utes were afraid that, if they began living like white men, then whites would stop sending aid. Despite all their supposed inferiorities as a people, Meeker felt that they were cunning enough to take advantage of government aid without having to work for it. In her narrative, Josephine described Utes as "shrewd yet ignorant;" Utes were good at getting what they wanted without becoming any more civilized by the standards of white society. By her

[34] Josephine Meeker, *The Ute Massacre: Brave Miss Meeker's Captivity, Her Own Account of It* (Philadelphia, PA: Old Franklin Publishing House, 1879), 5-9. The concern over Euro-American efforts to cultivate indigenous lands were not unfounded in context of shifting tides of Federal Indian Policy and ideas that allotment of Native American lands would result in assimilation. See Hoxie, *A Final Promise,* and Prucha, *The Great Father*.

account, the rebel band who led the attack on the reservation preferred to make their living off "theft, murder, and scarring women," but, when work would benefit them, "you could persuade them by coaxing them and giving them things."[35]

That the Utes were gaming the system and not allowing her to do what she felt was her job, clearly upset Josephine, enough so that she felt she possessed the authority to voice her opinions on federal Indian Policy. In her testimony, she stated the belief that it was the government's lenient policy towards Native American resistance on reservations which resulted in such incidents as the White River Reservation attack. Meeker wrote that "it will constantly be thus until the whole Indian question is placed in control of the War Department. Then the Army officers could give them the annuity goods, and punish instantly any insubordination." In advocating the War Department be placed in charge and allowed to use military force, Meeker also acknowledged the corrupt practices of white Indian Agents.[36]

This was an instance where a female captive not only vocalized an opinion on government failings but criticized Euro-American corruption which had played a part in heightening tension between Utes and whites which resulted in the attack, her father's death, and her own captivity. Although she was clearly aware of corruption on the part of the government and spoke of it in her court testimony, Meeker still placed most of the blame upon the Utes and expected reparations to be made. In short, she relied on the corrupt system which she had so recently criticized, from reservation annuities.[37]

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[35] US Congress, Testimony in Relation to the Ute Indian Outbreak, 74-75. It should be noted that large portions of the copy of Josephine's testimony used for this project are unreadable due to fading and being a scanned document.

[36] US Congress, Testimony in Relation to the Ute Indian Outbreak, 71-94.

[37] Meeker, *The Ute Massacre*, 4. She framed the circumstances leading up to the attack as Ute laziness and Indian Agent corruption which made it impossible for her father to distribute annuities consistently.

Instances of Native Americans taking advantage of the system were also prevalent in Kelly's narrative. At one point early in her captivity, Kelly noticed multiple mixed-race children among the Ogallala Sioux. Upon conversing with their mothers, she learned that these women had "fort marriages" to white military officers and had mixed children with their supposed husbands only to be cast out when the man's white wife finally made the journey west. The cast-off indigenous wives and their children would return to their tribe only to have their sons and daughters abused and themselves largely neglected by other tribe members. Unsupported by their former husbands, these women lived impoverished on the outskirts of both white and native society. Kelly remarked that "it was a very sad thought for me to realize that a parent could part with such a child, committing it forever to live in barbarous ignorance, and rove the wood among savages with the impress of his own superior race so strong mingled with his Indian origin." [38]

Although she was repulsed by the neglect these soldiers had for their own children, Kelly only appeared upset on the grounds that a partially white child, even one with "Indian origins" was still superior to a purely Native child and thus deserved better treatment. Interestingly, she was not overly sympathetic to the treatment of indigenous women who were tricked into a false marriage. The reason for this is explained later when she met one of the chief's sisters who had been a fort wife and had been since been dismissed. Upon more conversation, the woman expressed a deep hatred of whites and gleefully told Kelly that she was receiving supplies from Fort Laramie. The woman confided that Sioux would often "claim friendship, and they [whites] can not prove that we don't feel it." Despite her hatred for white soldiers, the woman would pretend allegiance to receive hand-outs.[39]

[38] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 84-85.
[39] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 126.

One could argue that, given the repulsion over Mormons and polygamy that makes appearances in many male and female narratives of this period, had a white woman been tricked into a polygamous relationship, it would be expected that reparations be made by the false husband. Rather, because it was a Sioux woman dealing with white military men, the chief's sister did not have such luxury of making those kinds of demands and had to instead pretend to still be friendly towards the soldier who had mistreated her. Kelly did not see it this way and was repulsed by how Native American women were taking advantage of white soldiers.[40]

The chief's sister and fort wives were not the only ones to pretend friendship. After suffering a crippling wound, Kelly's captor, the chief of the Sioux band, never healed, and he was no longer able to participate in the raids on whites that he had previously led and boasted to Kelly about. Years after her captivity, Kelly learned that this chief, despite what he had done to her family, was "living in forts along the Missouri River, gladly claiming support from the government." Throughout her writing, Kelly was not overly bitter about many topics relating to her captivity, preferring to focus on her own triumphs over her captors. However, the fact that a man who she viewed as a murderous criminal was living in supposed luxury on government money was something Kelly was openly bitter about. She seemed to both view this as a testament to the poor character of Native people as well as a failing in government policy.[41]

Similarly, in meeting a captive woman of the Yanktons, Mary Boyeau, Kelly was told that, like the Sioux, Yanktons were "friendly by pretense and go to the agencies for supplies and annuities but at heart are bitterly hostile." It was their belief that, if tribes "did not murder and steal, the Father at Washington would forget them; and now they receive presents and supplies to

[40] Stallard also suggested that military wives, although completely devoted to furthering their husband's careers, also perceived prostitutes and indigenous women as threats. She argues that most wives were able to accept prostitutes as a necessary evil but never reconciled with Native women. See *Glittering Misery*, 12-13, 101, 128.
[41] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 127-128.

keep them in check, which they delight in taking and deceiving the officers." Here, Kelly's perspective matched Meeker's: the government was giving too much away too easily to tribes which were not nearly as pacified by payments as they led the government to believe. She failed to see any reason why the Sioux and Yanktons might be so bitter.[42]

It was not that Kelly did not witness and relate any events which could explain indigenous hostility towards Euro-American efforts at appeasement for abuses against their people. Immediately following a fight and Sioux retreat, Kelly was given a letter that had been found on a dead American soldier. As the Sioux could not read English, they asked her to translate. She related the contents, writing that "General Sully's men had caught the red devils and cut their heads off, and stuck them up on poles." While not condemning what the American troops were doing, Kelly admitted some amount of shock at the violence and barbary of placing heads on poles. At another point, the Ogallala Sioux raided an abandoned U.S. military encampment. Many ate bread and crackers that the soldiers had left behind and later died; troops had poisoned the food with strychnine in retaliation for a recent massacre that had taken place in Minnesota. Her captors told Kelly that "more had died from eating bad bread than from bullets during the whole summer campaign." Death by poisoning is never pain free nor quick, and Kelly, serving as a healer during her captivity, witnessed this cruelty of white soldiers towards Native people who had no hand in the Minnesota incident.[43]

Despite all her rhetoric against her captors, despite her vivid depictions on their supposed savagery and baseness, she was aware that white men were also cruel and savage towards indigenous people. Although she did not outright condemn the U.S. troops nor blatantly accuse

[42] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 116. Prucha characterizes the latter half of the 19th century as a "high point of paternalism" even though the rhetoric of "Great Father" had largely disappeared. It is curious to see then that, throughout the three largest narratives, the use of overt paternalism. See *The Great Father*, 610.
[43] Kelly, *My Captivity*, 104-05, 151.

the government of being wrong as Josephine Meeker did, Kelly made clear that neither side was fully innocent while also avoiding the origins of conflict, American expansion. Much like Meeker, however, Kelly seemed to place more guilt on the nature of the "red men," and, in the end, when it came to her court petition and money to live independently, Kelly seems to have chosen herself despite her full knowledge that the wrong people would be paying for her losses.

Sharp similarly appeared to know that the wrong people paid her reparations. Hers is the only petition which contained an open acknowledgement that the rebel band of Sioux who had taken her captive should be the ones to pay for her captivity yet those Sioux living on reservations were expected to provide Sharp's annuity out of their own funds. She acknowledged the significance of annuities to Native Americans living on reservations, but, being extremely harsh in her condemnation of her captors, she only applauded any white actions against the Sioux.

Like Kelly and Meeker, Sharp included incidents of white mistreatment of Native Americans, and she related an incident at the Yellow Medicine Agency on a day when annuities were to be distributed to several different tribes. It was during her return from captivity, and she had not officially been handed over to the U.S. military yet. She noted the "wild confusion" amongst the gathered Native men and "as no intelligible explanation could be given them for the delay they became very much excited." Fear of an outbreak spread amongst white people at the agency, which, according to Sharp, was not unfounded as this had been a recurring issue, and which later resulted in a violent protest in 1862. Sharp concluded that the military must be withholding the money until she had been completely traded back as a precautionary action. Although Sharp appeared disgusted that Native Americans were so reliant on funds and prone to

violence, she was aware that promised funds were not always distributed to dependent tribes nor was there generally any explanation why.[44]

Sharp's refusal to feel sympathy for tribes who had been physically removed and stripped of their cultural way of life relates back to her sentiments on the people themselves. Like Kelly, she believed that the Sioux were only feigning friendliness. As proof, Sharp offered the story of Philander Prescott, a white man who had embraced Sioux life and lived among them for forty-five years. When Sioux and U.S. military relations turned violent, Sharp claimed that Prescott was murdered for no reason other than his whiteness, a sign that the "iron heart of the savage shows no pity, no mercy." She firmly believed that all indigenous people simply wanted to kill whites and was seemingly immune to the irony of Euro-American sentiment and actions towards all other, non-white races during a time of "ethnocentrism of frightening intensity."[45]

In writing of how the Sioux should be dealt with, Sharp felt that kindness and money was a mistake. She claimed to have experienced all the "cruelties and indignities" imaginable at their hands and, as it was the only thing Sioux could understand, it was likewise how they should be dealt with. According to her, the "Sioux were always a terror to the whites. They were cunning, treacherous, and bloodthirsty, and the most dreaded tribe in the West." Sharp believed this was their character at birth, and anything but violence directed at them was a waste of government resources. Not only was it a wasted effort, but the Sioux had a history of violence towards "civilized peoples," which was now going unpunished as the tribe was now fed at the "enormous expense" of the government. For Sharp, who admitted that her hatred for Native Americans was

[44] Sharp, *The History of Spirit Lake Massacre*, 250-51.

[45] Sharp, *The History of Spirit Lake Massacre*, 212; Prucha, *The Great Father*, 610. It is interesting to see how Sharp flipped the racialization. Despite her continuous reminders that Native people were an inferior race, that even their children are evil, Sharp also tried to make the Sioux appear irrationally cruel towards whites; it was their only desire to kill white people simply for their skin color. All this is said despite her own detailing of how she would intentionally torment and injure a Sioux infant simply because he was Sioux and that was offense enough.

horribly un-Christian, this was an injustice too great for words. She felt all Native Americans should pay for her captivity and trauma after. Although aware of the importance of reservation annuities, Sharp dismissed sympathy on the grounds that there was apparently no "good Indian." Taking money from the wrong people was just as much justice to her as taking money from those directly responsible for her captivity.[46]

In the end, these women chose themselves while knowing the possible cost to Native Americans that may have never had anything to do with their captivity. None of these women could plead complete ignorance to the white injustices done to indigenous people. If anything, living among them for even a short time would have given them a unique opportunity to witness white settler and military action against Native American combatants and non-combatants alike. They had an opportunity to speak out on government mistreatment of Native Americans. Given this chance to be a female voice of authority and possibly activism, they rather only pointed out government mistakes and recommended harsher courses of punishment could be taken. These were women with an agenda of revenge who gladly participated in the larger imperial effort to colonize and "tame" the American West.[47]

What is happening here is an exchange of freedoms for a common goal. The Federal government and society were allowing returned captive women to be financially free and even wealthy in exchange for the women's testimony against various indigenous groups. The women,

[46] Abbie Gardner Sharp, "Mrs. Abbie Gardner Sharp's Letter," *The Annals of Iowa 3,* no. 7 (1898), 550-551; Sharp, History of Spirit Lake Massacre, 19, 58. Sharp mentions "cruelties and indignities" in her letter and throughout her narrative. This is something that many women alluded to, and it is unclear if they simply meant torture, malnourishment, and loss or if it was an implication of rape without outright admitting to it.

[47] Burnham wrote on the opportunity for exposure of captive women and their readers to "alternative cultural paradigms." She suggested the genre allowed both to "indulge in that which they simultaneously disavowed," suggesting that, while extremely ethnocentric, captive women and their audiences possessed a deep curiosity and even some amount of sympathy for their captors although it could never be publicly stated. See *Captivity and Sentiment*, 3, 176.

for their part, actively chose to participate in this exchange, knowing what it would cost the Native Americans who relied on the reservation annuities and who had their land forcefully seized and sold when annuities owed to tribes were not enough to meet yearly reparation payments. This was, in a singular circumstance, a part of the larger picture of white colonization, and women, although frequently left out of the story, were a part of it. Returned captive women were every bit as ambitious, racist, and imperialist as their male counterparts. They seized the opportunity to be heard through testimonies, interviews, lectures, and their own narratives. Taking advantage of a century-old piece of corrupt and unfair legislation, the women went to court demanding large sums of money, fully expecting to receive the amount they sued for. They were sometimes willing to take Native American lands as a part of that payment and some never married or re-married because of the guarantee of money redirected from reservation annuities in addition to the income from self-published narratives and public donations. Not to be mistaken as inanimate tools of white male imperialism, these women were every bit as active in the story of the suppression of Native Americans.

Conclusion

Anne E. Hyde, in reference to historical invisibility of women and Native Americans in the American West, wrote that most people "leave only a few traces or record only one aspect of their lives: one exciting moment, a series of business deals, a journey, solitary entries of births, marriages, and deaths." For captive women writing from 1865 to 1920, their narratives often were their "one exciting moment" in which they appeared on the historical record. Some, as can be seen in the first chapter, lived on in newspapers, artwork, and memorials. Others appeared in court documents and petitions for reparations as seen in the third chapter. The record of these women's lives is incomplete, and many even had their names wiped from history in reports that only noted a "woman taken into captivity."

What is known can be vague, only mentioned in passing in newspaper columns. The Kimballs went on a national tour. Jessie Lacomber married Dash Kensington and travelled in luxury. The Germain sisters settled in their new home in Kansas. These little snippets leave many questions unanswered. How did self-publishing affect these women's lives? What did they do with money gained in reparations? Did these women stay in the West or return to friends and family back East? Did they continue to participate in Euro-American efforts towards Native Americans? In most cases, these will always be unanswered questions, but it is worth looking at the select few captive women who can be traced.

For Abbie Gardner Sharp, life did not get much easier after captivity. Shortly after moving in with her only surviving relative, one of her sisters near Spirit Lake, Iowa, Sharp married her husband and moved to Butler County, Iowa. Following the birth of her first son, the

Sharp family removed to settle in Missouri. After a house fire destroyed that settlement, the family again moved, this time to Kansas before moving back to Iowa where their second son was born, and another fire destroyed that settlement as well. Struggling with health complications and the still-birth of her third child, Sharp took a trip to New York to recover and visit childhood friends. Eventually recovering her health, Sharp purchased her old family home at Spirit Lake and began travelling to lecture on her experience and the "prospects" of Native American people. In the epilogue of her 1902 edition, Sharp also related her time as a consultant to the Bureau of Indian Affairs during which she visited reservations and gave reports on the "progress of the Indians."[1]

Similarly, Fanny Kelly had a rough life following captivity. Kelly and her husband stayed at Ft. Sully for a period to celebrate her return, during which time they also assisted in the retrieval of another woman who had been reported captive in the area. The funds for the expedition were provided by Mr. Kelly from the money he had intended to use to barter for his wife's release. The couple moved to Kansas and experienced several Native American raids on their new settlement. Eventually her husband contracted cholera and died in 1867, and, in "delicate health," herself, Kelly decided to move back East. After a period of recovery, Kelly found herself in financial straits and decided to sell the property in Kansas. She used the funds to move to Wyoming where she began working on her narrative, the incomplete manuscript of which was stolen and sold to a publisher by a "false friend." Determined to seek justice for everything that had gone wrong in her life, Kelly went to Washington to seek reparations and give interviews to raise awareness about her experience as well as the fake narrative which

[1] Abbie Gardner Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre and Captivity of Miss Abbie Gardner,* 4th ed. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa Printing Co., 1902), 274-82.

"defrauded her." By her own account, she then wrote her narrative and sought a peaceful life back in Wyoming.[2]

The more widely documented captivity of the Meeker women reveals no less difficult lives following the events of the White River incident. Josephine's narrative was published the same year of her captivity, and so does not provide information on the rest of her life as Sharp and Kelly did. Further, Josephine passed away from what was likely pneumonia or a "pulmonary infection" about four years after her captivity. In that short time, however, Josephine gave many newspaper interviews and public speeches sharing her knowledge of "Indian character." She also moved to Washington, D.C. where she worked a copyist in the Office of Indian Affairs. Later she became the secretary for a Colorado Senator, Henry Moore Teller, who advocated for the abolition of the reservation system and increased efforts to assimilate Native Americans.[3]

The significance of these women's actions within Euro-American efforts at colonization of the West should not be dismissed. These women did not simply have a single "exciting moment" but turned that moment, captivity, into a life mission centered around Native American suppression. The Germains, Kelly, and Sharp all stayed to in the West, actively participating in the removal of Native Americans from their lands both through forceful sale as in Indian Depredations Claims and continued settlement of the land long after. Sharp and Meeker worked with the Federal government on reservation policy particularly relating to the education of Native American youths. All the women here discussed reaped the benefits of an imperialist colonial system, which, in the name of nation building, allowed the women to step out of their

[2] Fanny Kelly, *My Captivity: A Pioneer Woman's Story of her Life Among the Sioux* (Toronto: Maclear, 1872), 228-37, 247-54.

[3] Dee Brown, *The Gentle Tamers: Women of the Old Wild West* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1981), 35; Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973), 338-42. Arivella Meeker moved to live with her remaining daughter, a teacher, and lived off her depredations for the rest of her life. Price disappeared from the record.

acceptable gendered norms and become agents in the suppression, removal, and assimilation of indigenous peoples.

Further, much of what has been discussed throughout these chapters has been about the actions of a select few women who can be traced within the larger historical narrative. While this project has been about exploring one instance in which women were able to gain autonomy and financial freedom, it is not meant to glorify these women or present them as "great women" in American history. It must not be forgotten that the price of their freedom was often at the cost of another's, that of Native peoples. Though only a few women have been discussed in these chapters, they perhaps represent only a small part of a larger movement by captive women. Those taken unnamed women in captivity may have also returned to sue for reparations or perhaps used another local, state, or federal mechanism to seek financial security from or even revenge on their "savage" captors. These women, both named and unnamed, should be added to the cannon of female characters in the American West who shared the similar Euro-American dream of a land of opportunity for those "civilized" and bold enough to take it.

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