Chapter 7

Captive or Captivated: Rethinking Encounters in Early Colonial America

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One of the most popular forms of literature in both America and Europe from the seventeenth century until the latter half of the nineteenth century was the genre that came to be known as the "captivity narrative." From the amazing third-person narrative of John Smith that detailed his narrow escape from death at the hands of the Powhatan to the classic best-seller of the colonial period *A true history of the captivity & restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, a minister's wife in New-England.: Wherein is set forth the cruel and inhumane usage she underwent amongst the heathens, for eleven weeks' time: and her deliverance from them* (Rowlandson 1682), the genre was America's first flirtation with mythoprosaic representation. According to scholar Denise MacNeil (2005), the narrative "illustrates Rowlandson's place as a cultural hero, capable of furnishing the raw materials necessary for the formation and emergence of the American frontier hero from within the *Narrative*. As such, Rowlandson's text provides the primary American literary roots of this American frontier hero" (p. 626). Rowlandson's work established the pattern for the early texts in this tradition: a confirmation of the election of God's people, the piety of the captives, and the justification for Indian removal; the narrative went through four editions in its first year and to date, at least forty editions have appeared (Elliott and Davidson 1991, p. 32).

One of the more interesting narratives of this genre was that of the free black John Marrant whose story was lifted up by Henry Louis Gates in his work *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (1989). Gates describes Marrant's *A Narrative of the Life of John Marrant, of New York, in North America With [an] Account of the Conversion of the King of the Cherokees and*

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His Daughter as an "Indian captivity tale" and "one of the three most popular stories of Indian captivity, surpassed in number of editions only by those of Peter Williamson (1757) and Mary Jemison (1784)" (p. 142). In writing of Marrant's capture, Gates describes it thus: "Marrant, like Gronniosaw, was fifteen when captured. Wandering through the wilderness, Marrant encountered an Indian 'fortification' protected by strategically placed 'guards.' The Cherokee guard politely informed him that he must be put to death for venturing onto Cherokee land" (pp. 142–3). When brought before the executioner, Marrant began to engage in what Gates describes as a "divinely inspired fluency in Cherokee" and again later Marrant engaged in his "gift of tongues" before the Cherokee; time and again, Gates describes Marrant's fluency in Cherokee as "inspired by God."

As often occurs in the tropes of American history, there is a little bit more to this story than Marrant's "captivity" and his fluency in Cherokee being "inspired by God." Though his interpretation is literary and inspirational, Gates chooses to ignore a very simple fact expressed by Marrant early on in this narrative:

> As I was going on, and musing upon the goodness of the Lord, an Indian hunter, who stood at some distance, saw me; he hid himself behind a tree, but as I passed along he bolted out, and put his hands on my breast, which surprised me a few a moments. He then asked me where I was going? I answered I did not know, but where the Lord was pleased to guide me…To this he made me no answer, only said, I know you, and your mother and sister, and upon a little further conversation I found he did know them, having been used in winter to sell skins in our town. This alarmed me, and I wept for fear he would take me home by force; but when he saw me so affected, he said he would not take me home if I would go with him…Our employment for ten weeks and three days, was killing deer, and taking off their skins by day, which we afterwards hung on the trees to dry till they were sent for; the means of defense and security against our nocturnal enemies, always took up the evenings…A fire was kindled in the front of our temporary lodging room, and fed with fresh fuel all night, as we slept and watched by turns; and this was our defense from the dreadful animals, whose shining eyes and tremendous roar we often saw and discard during the by constant conversation with the hunter, I acquired a fuller knowledge of the Indian tongue: This, together with a sweet communion I enjoyed with God, I have considered as a preparation for the great trial I was soon after to pass through. The hunting season being now at an end, we left the woods, and directed our course towards a large Indian town, belonging to the Cherokee nation; and having reached it, I said to the hunter, they will not suffer

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> me to enter in. He replied, as I was with him, nobody would interrupt me. (Marrant 1785, p. 13)

So Marrant did not just wander in the Cherokee Nation nor was his fluency in Cherokee "inspired by God," but he was invited by his friend to enter the town and his fluency was acquired by nearly three months of being daily in the presence of the Cherokee. Though it is certain that neither Marrant nor the "Indian hunter" he had befriended expected that he would be seized and charged with a capital crime, it is not exactly correct to view Marrant's story as an "Indian captivity tale." That John Marrant lived among the Cherokee for another six months and served as an emissary to other Indian nations in their immediate territory only further complicates the notion of his mission as a captivity narrative.

The idea that Marrant's story does not fit the paradigm of an "Indian captivity tale" is not a unique one. In her work "Recapturing John Marrant," Benilde Montgomery (1993) argues that "Marrant does not understand himself as the victim of frivolous circumstance, but as an active participant in the evolution of a providential design" (pp. 106–107). Furthermore, she believes that Marrant sees himself as a missionary such as Jonathan Edwards or his hero George Whitefield. Rosalie Murphy Baum agrees and sees Marrant's narrative as resembling the religious essays and conversion narratives of Jonathan Edwards, John Woolman, and Roger Williams as opposed to the captivity narrative (Baum 1994, p. 537). Cedrick May (2004) sees Marrant's narrative as an ordination sermon and believes that "to study [Marrant's Narrative] primarily as a captivity narrative is to discount its emphasis on . . . proper Christian knowledge" (p. 556). Philip Gould (2000) asserts that Marrant's narrative turns the idea of a captivity narrative on its head: "Traditionally seen as an Indian captivity narrative (and included in modern anthologies of the genre), Marrant's work actually inverts the moral geography of Indian captivity" (p. 669).

Marrant's narrative epitomizes the complexity of dealing with early colonial encounters and the fluidity of definitions such as adoption, captivity, and slavery. What the very persons themselves may describe as "captivity" for their kin, community, and avid audiences may not have been captivity at all but something more akin to adoption or, as in Marrant's case, absorption or a communal embrace. As all of us know, families and friends are less than excited when we abandon them for even the most mundane things such as going off to college, getting married, or moving to a distant city. Therefore,

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the prospects of being taken from one's immediate home and being delivered into the hands of the enemy, especially when that "enemy" was considered hostile and even lacking humanity, encourages one to bend and shape the conditions of capture to better accommodate the social conditions of the time. In her work "Going Native, Telling Tales: Captivity, Collaborations, and Empire," historian Linda Colley (2000) correctly notes,

> Almost by definition, captivities of this sort, especially when protracted, involved all kinds of circulations, mixings and inversions of customary power-relations. To assume in this context a stable, binary divide between European and non-European would be to exaggerate the unvarying power of this kind of group identity and the degree to which cultures are closed. (pp. 175–6)

If this "stable, binary divide" was not true for Europeans and Indians, then the "circulations, mixings and inversions" were even much more a fluid phenomena when talking about the interactions among non-Europeans during the colonial period. Though the story of John Marrant's "captivity" among the Cherokee is most familiar, it is not the sole narrative of non-Europeans taken from the colonial establishment into a different communal environment. As early as the sixteenth century, we have the story of Estavanico, "an Arabian black, native of Acamor," who accompanied Pamphilo de Narvaez into the colonial wilderness, was captured, and spent some six years as slaves of Indians in what is now western Louisiana or eastern Texas. Estavanico became extremely fluent in indigenous languages and after he escaped his "enslavement," he served as a liaison between the Spanish and the indigenous people of the American Southwest; he was renowned as a skilled "healer" and used this ability as an *entrada* into Native communities. Ultimately, Estavanico overextended his boundaries and was killed by the Lord of Cibola:

> For three days they made inquiries about him and held a council. The account which the negro gave them of two white men who were following him, sent by a great lord, who knew about the things in the sky, and how these were coming to instruct them in divine matters, made them think that he might be a spy or guide from some nations who wished to come and conquer them, because it seemed to them unreasonable to say that the people were white in the country from which he came and that he was sent by them, he being black. Besides these other reasons, they thought it was hard of him to ask them for

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> turquoises and women and so they decided to kill him . . . (Castenada, quoted in Logan 1940, p. 49)

In his 2006 article "Following Estevanico: The Influential Presence of an African Slave in Sixteenth-century New World Historiography," Richard Gordon (2006) notes not only the complexities of representation of a "more complicated and nuanced captive state," but also the problematic historiographical representations of Estavanico (p. 187). Historians' attempts to portray Estavanico are themselves heuristic devices used to propel particularities and situational variables that suit the author's intent and not necessarily an accuracy of representation. Gordon states:

> Written from the mid-sixteenth to early-seventeenth centuries, these texts variously exploit the air of ambiguity, hybridity, and mutability that surrounds Esteban, some of which the enslaved explorer himself had cultivated. On the one hand, the writers exploit Esteban's changing states of freedom and captivity and the unclear nature of his final imprisonment and execution. On the other hand, they attempt to harness his ethnic complexity. (P. 189)

In 1526, Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon, a royal judge residing in Santo Domingo, led a voyage of 500 men and women, including African slaves and Dominican friars, to establish a Spanish colony called San Miguel de Gualdape on an island just off the coast of Savannah Georgia (Bourne 1904, p. 67). It is also reported that Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon led a group of Spanish sailors and established a temporary colony in North Carolina, probably located at the mouth of the Cape Fear River (State of North Carolina). Some historians even report that Vasquez de Ayllon attempted to settle on the Chesapeake River near what would become Jamestown Island about this same time; he is said to have brought 600 men and women, including many Negro slaves, 100 horses, and a Jesuit priest named Antonio Montesino (Fiske 1892, p. 83).

In October of that year, there was a slave revolt among the Africans under de Ayllon's command at San Miguel de Gualdape and the colony was overthrown and the Spanish departed; in a footnote in Peter Wood's *Black Majority*, he states that it is speculated that "Indians instigated the revolt" (Wood 1974, p. 3). What remained of the colony—largely African slaves—fled the aborted colony and became members of a community of the Cofitachequi Indians at the head of the Santee River in what Herbert Aptheker (1963) refers to as "the first permanent inhabitants, other than the Indians, in what was to be

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the United States" (p. 163). Further evidence of the permanence of this settlement of Africans among the Indians is provided for us by a later visitor by the name of Hernando de Soto who, when he plundered a temple mound at the holy city of Talomeco, found "Biscayan axes of iron and rosaries with their crosses" and other items of European descent that had been left there by the refugee African slaves (Bourne 1904, p. 69). Now, if the slave revolt were indeed inspired by the local Indians and the African slaves fled to live among the Cofitachequi, then we, again, encounter a complex scenario in which the traditional understandings and language of colonial encounter becomes exceedingly problematic.

When Hernando de Soto arrived among the very same Cofitachequi Indians of the coastal Carolinas in 1540, he also brought with him African slaves bearing Spanish surnames including the slave of one Andre de Vasconcelos. When Hernando de Soto and his party first met with the "Queen of the Cofitachequi," she noticed this slave of Andre de Vasconcelos and in a matter of seconds, the borders that separated the "old world" and the "new world" were crossed and matters of state became superseded by matters of the heart. A few days later, de Soto seized the Beloved Woman and forced her to lead his expedition into the interior coastlands in search of gold. As she was leading them on their way, she "left the road, with the excuse of going in the thicket, where, deceiving them, she so concealed herself that for all their search she could not be found" (Jameson 1907, p. 177).

De Soto, all the more frustrated because the Beloved Woman had fled with a box of "unbored pearls" of great value, decided to move on to Guaxule (ibid.). However, it seems that the lady had made other plans and had arranged for a rendezvous with other members from de Soto's party. These included an "Indian slave boy from Cuba," a "slave belonging to Don Carlos, a Berber, well versed in Spanish," and "Gomez, a negro belonging to Vasco Goncalvez who spoke good Spanish" (Bourne 1904, p. 104). Alimamos, a horseman sent by de Soto to find the fugitives, "got lost" and happened upon the refugee slaves. He "labored with the slaves to make leave of their evil designs." Two of the slaves did just that and returned to de Soto but "when they arrived, the Governor wished to hang them" (Jameson 1907, p. 178).

However, the horseman Alimamos reported yet another story that was something altogether shocking. He stated that "the *Cacica* remained in Xuala, with a slave of Andre de Vasconcelas, who would not come with him (Alimamos), and that it was very very sure that

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they lived together as man and wife, and were to go together to Cutafichiqui" (p. 172). In an effort that would be repeated countless times over the next 300 years, refugee slaves fled from their masters to the sanctuary villages of the neighboring Indians and were thus welcomed and protected. Equally important to our collective history, the "Queen of Cofitachequi" and the "slave of Andre de Vasconcelas" returned to their "village of the dogwoods" on the banks of the Savannah River near Silver Bluff, S.C. where they would begin a life together in what would become a prominent Aframerindian community.

Some years later in 1619, Sir Edwin Sandys—the newly appointed treasurer of the Virginia Company headed by Captain John Smith—put forward the idea of a college where "Indian youth would be acquainted with the more sophisticated aspects of Christianity and civility" (Morgan 1975, p. 98). In order to finance this enterprise, the Virginia Company acquired a particular commodity described in a letter from John Rolfe, widowed husband of Pocahontas, to Sir Edwin Sandys:

> About the latter end of August, a Dutch man of Warr of the burden of 160 tons arrived at Point Comfort, the Comandor's name was Capt. Jope, his Pilot for the West Indies one Mr. Marmaduke an Englishman. They mett with the "Treasurer" in the West Indies and determined to hold consort shipp hetherward, but in their passage lost one the other. He brought not anything but 20 and odd Negroes, which the Governor and Cape Merchant bought for victualle [whereof he was in greate need as he pretended] at the best and easyest rate they could. He hadd a lardge and ample Comyssion from his Excellency to range and to take purchase in the West Indies. (Kingsbury n.d.)

These Africans were not "slaves" as many people think because there were no slave laws in place at this time; these "20 and odd Negroes" were initially treated as indentured servants and given the same opportunities for freedom dues as whites. These Africans were settled on "the governor's land," Governor Yeardley's 2,200-acre tobacco plantation. That land was home to the Weyanoke people, in what is now Charles City County, Virginia (Weyanoke Association).

When these Africans had worked off their period of indentured servitude, they joined the immediate community and sought out those persons most like themselves with whom they could settle. They found the Native peoples of southeastern Virginia who shared with them a culture similar to their own—one rooted in a sacred relationship to the subtropical coastlands of the middle Atlantic. They

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forged ties and kinship and bonds of love into a culture that would forever change the landscape of southeastern Virginia. It has been estimated that as many as 80 percent of those persons in southeastern Virginia who are known today as African Americans have significant Native ancestry (Weyanoke Association).

However, Sandys's school would carry forward as he had envisioned it; yet it encountered a certain problematic nature: it seems that the Native peoples of southeastern Virginia had little or no inclination to becoming "acquainted with the more sophisticated aspects of Christianity and civility." Governor George Yeardley of Virginia supported Sandys's plan for a school and devised a plan to find students to fill the school. As the Powhatan chief and his people were reluctant to give up their children to be educated, Yeardley proposed that a group of English and Indian soldiers could engage in a raid upon a Siouan group beyond the falls of the James River. The raiding party would split the captured corn, land, and "booty of male and female children." Yeardley believed that the male children taken might serve to "furnish the intended college at Henrico" (Axtell 1985, p. 190).

A primary goal of the Virginia Company was "[the] propagating of Christian religion to such People, as yet live in Darkness and Miserable ignorance of the True Knowledge and Worship of God, and may in time bring the Infidels and Savages, living in those Parts, to Human civility, and to a settled and quiet government" (McDonald 1914, p. 24). The building of the missionary "university" was supposedly a major vehicle through which this goal was to be accomplished. In January 1691 the Reverend James Blair was in London seeking a royal charter for the College of William and Mary in order to keep Indian children "in Sicknesse and health, in Meat, drink, Washing, Lodgeing, Medicine, Cloathes, books, and Education from the first beginning of Letters til they are ready to receive Orders and be thought Sufficient to be sent abroad to preach and Convert Indians." As, again, the people of the Powhatan Confederation were less than willing to have their children adopted in colonial society, a cost was included in the budget of the new college for "buying or Procureing such Children" (Axtell 1985, p. 190).

Still having problems filling their new "university," the Virginians turned to their neighbor in the south to provide Indian children. When the Tuscarora Indians of North Carolina arose against colonial depredations, Lieutenant Governor Alexander Spotswood marched a large troop of Virginia militia to the border and demanded that the Tuscarora sign a treaty with the Virginians. Terms of that treaty included sending two sons of Tuscarora headmen as "hostages" to

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be "brought up at the college" there to serve as "security" for the Tuscarora's fidelity and to take the first step toward the conversion of the "whole Nations…to the Christian faith" (Axtell 1985, p. 191). The Tuscarora sent twenty sons to the Virginians to prevent military retribution; not happy, the college governors continued the practice of "buying Indians of remote nations taken in war to be educated" (ibid.). The Indians continued in their reluctance to send their children to be educated because they remembered the time they had tried to do so earlier—they had been shipped off to other countries and sold as slaves.

We have many captivity narratives within the canon of American literature, but we have very few, if any, that reflect the story of these young persons taken captive and brought up within an alien environment in which the line between evangelism and enslavement grew very thin. The story of missionary schools throughout colonial America is that of students brought forcibly into institutions where they were taught the civilized values of European society such as farming and husbandry for the men and housework for the women. "Hostages" all, their conversion came at a very high price. The poignant stories of these individuals serve to remind us that the lines between "adoption, captivity, and slavery" must be framed within a discussion of the function of the power to define more so than the ability to describe. We adopt. We educate. We civilize. They capture. They enslave. They destroy.

The focus of this book has been on the complexity of the interactions among the various people of the early colonial period and how the language that we have used throughout history to describe these relations has failed to capture the true nature of these relationships. Nowhere is this more valid than in the descriptions of the interactions among the people of the American Southeast. As discussed in chapter five, the very words and images that form the core of our collective understanding of this period are themselves distorted by the cultural and ideological inclinations of these so-called first-person accounts as well as those who promoted them. Slavery is a critical part of our southern history but that history itself, as we learned from chapters one–three, is myopic because it ignores the role that slavery played in transforming American society long before slavery became that "peculiar institution."

In reality, our understandings, today, of the meanings of "adoption, captivity, and slavery" are as fluid as were the actual practices themselves during the colonial period. In the stories given in this chapter, it is difficult to identify the captive and the capturer or

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even the enslaved and the enslaver. Often, as in the case of enslaved runaway Africans among the Seminole of Florida, the line between adoption, captivity, and enslaved becomes so fuzzy as to challenge even the greatest of our scholars much less the poor slave-owners of the Old South. Perhaps it was this very liminality that led the federal government to remove the Seminole to the Indian Territory in what was the bloodiest war in American history up to the civil war. Perhaps it is this very liminality that speaks to the heart of the struggle of who is and who isn't a Seminole, Mvskoke, or Tsalagi even unto this day; the whole term "Freedmen" is itself a paradox because the African American presence among the Five Nations cannot be collectivized into a singular term such as "Freedmen." Our collective histories are so interwoven and the lines of relationship so complex that to begin to define is an arbitrary exercise in power if not in futility. We can, at best, only describe these relationships.

Emblematic of the challenges we face as historians describing the relationships among various cultures in collision and collusion during the colonial period is that of Nancy Ward, or Nan'yehi, of the Tsalagi. Some consider Nan'yehi to be the first slave-owner within the Tsalagi Nation of the Old South, but, again, things are a little more complicated than this. Nan'yehi was born in 1738 in the Cherokee town of Chota, a "Peace Town" or "Mother Town" in the Overhill region of the Cherokee Nation. She was a member of the Wolf Clan. Her mother, whose actual name is not known, is often called Tame Deer, and was a daughter of Chief Moytoy I and a sister of Attakullakulla. Her father, Fivekiller, was probably part Leni Lenape (Cengage Learning 2008).

Nan'yehi's first husband was the Cherokee man by the name of Kingfisher. Nan'yehi and Kingfisher fought side by side at the Battle of Taliwa against the Mvskoke in 1755; she was about eighteen years old at this time. When Kingfisher was killed, she took up her slain husband's gun and, singing a war song, led the Cherokees in a rout of the enemy. Out of her loss was born a decisive victory for her people and a title of honor for her: the title of "Ghighua" or "Beloved Woman." For her valor in the Battle of Taliwa, Nan'yehi was given the life of a captured African American who had fought on the side of the Mvskoke (Access Genealogy 2008). Although she did take him home with her, whether or not he was "adopted" or "enslaved" is a story much to the preference of the storyteller. Whatever the case, he returned with her to the Cherokee Nation and became part of her entourage (Hoig 1998, p. 33). Some people refer to him as a slave; I

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like to think of him as a person who was able to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

It was up to the "beloved women" of the nation such as Nan'yehi to decide the fate of these individuals; they could "by the wave of a swan's wing, deliver a wretch condemned by the council, and already tied to the stake" (Timberlake in Williams 1948, p. 37). The Cherokee *atsi nahtsa'i,* or "captives without clans" (Perdue 1979, p. 12), were individuals captured through warfare and often given to clans who had lost members in the conflict (Reed 1970, p. 192). Women were in control of the system of indigenous slavery prior to contact with European society (De Vorsey 1971, p. 73). Once rescued, these persons owed their life to the Cherokee Nation. If accepted into the clan to replace lost members, they gained identity and protection through the clan and citizenship in the nation. If not, these individuals existed outside of the clan structure and on the periphery of Cherokee society. Though not members of the Cherokee Nation, neither were they considered to be a commodity (Perdue 1979, p. 13).

In 1780, following a Cherokee attack on the Fort Watauga settlement on the Watauga River (in present-day Elizabethton, Tennessee), Nan'yehi used her power as *Ghigau.* She came upon Mrs. Lydia Russell Bean, who was tied to a post and was about to be executed by two Tsalagi soldiers (Kidwell 1992, p. 103). Nan'yehi rescued Mrs. Bean and then she took her into her home and nursed her back to health from injuries she suffered in the battle (Mooney, 1900, p. 490). Mrs. Bean taught Nan'yehi how to weave, revolutionizing the Cherokee garments, which at the time were a combination of hides and cloth bought from traders. Mrs. Bean also rescued two of her dairy cows from the settlement, and brought them to Nan'yehi. From her "slave," Nan'yehi learned to raise cattle and to eat dairy products, which would sustain the Cherokee when hunting was bad (Perdue 1998, p. 116). Thus, in saving the life of her captive, she was able to prolong the life of her people. Throughout her long life, Nan'yehi used her remarkable power and presence to save the lives of captives time and again and worked pervasively to promote the best interests of her people. When she died in 1822, a different sort of captive was released, "a light rose from her body, fluttered like a bird around the room, and finally flew out the open door"; the light was last seen moving in the direction of Chota—mother town of the Cherokee (Carney 2001, p. 137).

Before we conclude, let us return again to the story of John Marrant and address a part of his life that is often not something that finds common discussion. Having become an Indian and returned to his

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family who did not recognize him as such, Marrant stripped away his Cherokee identity and escaped the bondage of a person that he was not. "I was then made known to all the family, to my friends, and acquaintances, who received me, and were glad, and rejoiced: Thus the dead was brought to life again; thus the lost was found" (Marrant 1785, p. 4). In a remarkably perceptive analysis, John Saillant (1999) notes that Marrant was no longer the black boy entertainer, nor the Indian, but had emerged as a black man, "who came to identify himself as African" and had become "a black visionary laboring among the dispossessed and forging an Africanist theology for them." As Saillant describes it, Marrant located his blackness "not only in his skin but also in his immersion in a black community" (p. 303). If we are to understand Saillant correctly, perhaps Marrant was indeed "captured" by the Cherokee; we might even say he was captivated. However, eventually he returned to who he was or perhaps emerged as someone he had never been.

John Marrant took a position as a "free carpenter" on the Jenkins plantation just outside of Charleston where he encountered enslaved "negro children" and his heart went out to them and he endeavored to teach them the rudiments of his Christian faith. What started out small soon blossomed into a full-blown mission; Marrant set up an evening school for about thirty slaves on the Jenkins plantation (Brooks 2003, p. 91). As with the Cherokee, Marrant sought to bring to the slaves on the plantation the word of the holy gospel. However, the mistress of the plantations was less than pleased at Marrant's efforts. Being shocked to find her slaves at prayer, she had her husband round up a posse and raid the prayer-meeting. "As the poor creatures came out they caught them, and tied them together with cords," Marrant reported, "till the next morning, when all they caught, men, women, and children, were strip'd naked and tied, their feet to a stake, their hands to the arm of a tree, and so severely flogged that the blood ran from their backs and sides to the floor, to make them promise they would leave off praying." Marrant warned the slave-owners "that the blood of these poor negroes that he had spilt that morning would be required by God at his hands" (Saillant 2008). In spite of their beating and the threats to Marrant, he continued to "steal away" with his congregation for nightly meetings in different corners of the plantation. When the slave-owner's wife passed away from illness, he joined with Marrant and the slaves in worship though he was never to free his slaves (Saillant 1999, p. 304). Though we may engage in semantic differentials among the definitions of adoption, captivity, and slavery, John Marrant had come to know first hand the very profound

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differences among these various words not by description but by experience. These experiences would shape his future life and work.

Not long after taking up his mission, Marrant was again captured. He describes it in his narrative, "In those troublesome times [the American revolution], I was pressed onboard the Scorpion sloop of war as their musician as they were told I could play on music." Unlike his "captivity" with the Cherokee that lasted a mere six months, Marrant was held by the British for more than six years and even began to lose faith; with great shame, he confessed, "that a lamentable stupor crept over my spiritual vivacity, life, and vigour; I got cold and dead" (Ennis 2002, p. 132). Even in the face of hardship, Marrant found biblical metaphors for his nearly daily challenges; in the battle of Charleston, he was swept overboard and nearly drowned but escaped death by praying as had Jonah when he faced a similar ordeal. In 1781, Marrant was discharged from the Royal Navy after his wounds made him incapable of "serving the King again"; it seems, as though with the Cherokee, his "captivity" had led him to an identification with his captors that again caused him to redefine himself. Some argue that Marrant joined the British Navy to escape slavery; however, he was never a slave but a free black who certainly knew first hand what slavery was and what freedom meant. Marrant is now considered a "Black Loyalist" and moved to Nova Scotia following his release from the British Navy. Again, we must wrestle with the problem of definition; was Marrant captured by the British or captivated with life as a Briton?

Many years later, John Marrant again appeared on the American scene, this time in Boston at African Lodge #459 chartered to Prince Hall and fourteen men of color by The Grand Lodge of England on September 29, 1784, as the first lodge of Black Freemasons in the United States of America. Prince Hall, himself, believed that all persons possessed "a natural and unalienable right to that freedom that the great Parent of the Universe hath bestowed equally on all mankind" (Hall, Bess, and others 1947, p. 5). On June 24, 1789, African Lodge #459 held its annual St. John's Day celebration. The Chaplain of African Lodge #459, the former "savage" John Marrant, delivered the St. John's Day sermon to assembled brothers. He beseeched them to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God…let love be without dissimulation, abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. These and many other duties are required of us as Christians, every one of which are like so many links of a chain" (Marrant, A Sermon Preached on the 24th Day of June 1789, Being the Festival of St. John the Baptist, At the

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Request of the Right Worshipful the Grand Master Prince Hall, and the Rest of the Brethren of the African Lodge of the Honourable Society of Free & Accepted, 1789, p. 7).

Marrant told his audience that a black exodus to Africa, the restoration of a pure and covenanted black community to their Zion, was an element of God's providential design. Marrant preached that this restoration would be as a benevolent overruling of the sins of the slave traders and slaveholders (Saillant 2008). Marrant spoke strongest against those that would despise their fellow men, as "tho' they were not of the same species with themselves, and would in their power deprive them of the blessings and comforts of life which God in his bountiful goodness hath freely given to all his creatures to improve and enjoy. Surely such monsters never came out of the hand of God in such a forlorn condition" (Marrant, Sermon, 1789, p. 7).

In conclusion the lines between adoption, captivity, and slavery are quite nebulous and the challenge for us today in identifying among adoptee, captive, and slave as well as adopter, captor, and enslaver is as complex and complicated as it was during the actual colonial period itself. This is nowhere more true than among persons of indigenous or African descent as we have explored in this chapter: John Marrant's experiences ran the panoply of concepts envisioned by the editors of this volume; the "Queen of the Cofitachequi" was both the captive and captor; the slaves of Ayllon rebelled against their enslavement and would ultimately become adopted into neighboring indigenous peoples; the "endentured servants" of Sandys's experiment in a "missionary university" fared far better than those who ultimately became the "students" of what would become William and Mary [or many of the other elite institutions of the colonial period]; Nan'yehi's role as *Ghigau* gave her the power of definition over Cherokee captives and her decisions regarding life or death were as much utilitarian as merciful.

As mentioned earlier, we must be comfortable with our role as describing the particular events in the encounters between colonial forces and be reticent to easily define these as "adoption," "captivity," or "slavery." Even with our descriptions, we must recognize the tentative nature of these expeditions and appreciate the subtle contexts from which these descriptions arise, the profound nature of power relationships entailed in any cultural encounter, and the challenge of distance both temporal and intellectual that seems a prerequisite of scholarly engagement. If Henry Louis Gates misses the boat by referring to John Marrant's story as a "captivity narrative," then we must appreciate his "original intent" (borrowing a term

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from politics). Today interpretists on the web and elsewhere refer to Nan'yehi as "the first Cherokee slaveowner" (Cengage Learning, 2008), then we have to understand that this term is not so much a function of ignorance but one of the comfortable power of hermeneutical distance or (to borrow a phrase once again) an heuristic algorithm. When scholars meet to try to come to terms with the very nature of the colonial encounter, we must emerge with the recognition that we can, at best, grasp cautiously at the very fluid and permanently itinerant nature of these concepts yet only in expression and not in actuality.

This fact, however, must not inhibit our endeavors. There are those who seek to understand these early encounters in discrete, almost finite, terms; they are uncomfortable around uncertainty. In this world, description without definition is somehow inadequate. This is the very nature of the academy; this is the raison d'etre of the scholarly endeavor. However, we have a higher responsibility; we have to understand and appreciate the majesty of the mystery of these colonial encounters.

In the stories of both the Tsalagi and the Mvskoke of the American Southeast, there is the lesson of the corn mother; in both of these stories, the curiosity of the sons to understand the workings of magic leads to the unbecoming of the corn mother. In her telling of the Mvskoke version of this story, Jean Chaudhuri states that the corn mother admonishes her progeny for the implications of his inquiry, "Now, you have to take care of everything and work to deal with the responsibilities of your curiosity" (Jean Chaudhuri; Joyotpaul Chaudhuri 2001, p. 63). The responsibility of our curiosity is the recognition of the probability that our every attempt to articulate, define, and refine the parameters of these colonial encounters is simply an exercise of sisyphean proportion.

That this exercise remains ever elusive and our understandings remarkably muddled even to this day needs no further evidence than that struggle among the Five Nations of the American Southeast over the definition of its own citizens of mixed heritage. In her pivotal work *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma*, Circe Sturm attempts to deconstruct the clever narratives that reconstruct the identity of persons of mixed Native/African descent within the Cherokee Nation as persons who belonged to the nation yet were not of the nation. As the work of scholars such as James Brooks, Claudio Saunt, Tiya Miles, and Celia Naylor have brilliantly shown, the identity of persons of mixed race within the Five Nations is as much a matter of social and political construction

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today as it was a literary one within the earlier period. The history of the legal cases of persons of mixed heritage within has been so lengthy and complex that the Cherokee Nation, only a few years ago, set aside the legal wranglings and voted to disenfranchise persons in the Cherokee Nation of African descent.

The U.S. Congress, in H.R. 2824, seeking to punish the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma for that vote aims to "sever United States' government relations with the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma until such time as the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma restores full tribal citizenship to the Cherokee Freedmen disenfranchised in the March 3, 2007, Cherokee Nation vote and fulfills all its treaty obligations with the Government of the United States, and for other purposes" (CONGRESS 2008). The Cherokee Nation, as late as January of 2011, filed an appeal in its tribal Supreme Court to defend the constitutional amendment that effectively barred freedmen who don't have tribal blood from Cherokee citizenship. If the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma can't even to this day define its own citizens without regard to race, how are we to distinguish among who was held captive by one culture or another or who was simply captivated with one culture or another.

Perhaps that is a good thing. It seems that far too many Americans have little tolerance for ambiguity and go about the world exercising their predilection for defining words such as "freedom" and "democracy" not just for ourselves but for "other" folks, too. Perhaps we should just learn an appreciation for the complexity that renders our past all the more intriguing and the future all the more challenging. Maybe I just have a little bit too much affection for the foggy valleys that make up the mountains of our historical research. Maybe that doesn't make me a good scholar. Maybe, it doesn't even make me a good American. However, I firmly believe it makes me a better person.

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