

Abstract

Most readings of American captivity narratives have so far investigated their intercultural, psychological, and theological significances, while disregarding their ecological aspects. Despite its appropriation into US-American national literature, the captivity genre contains at its root a transcultural plot of an individual's confrontation with the environment and the unsettling forces of wilderness and animality. These personal memoirs indeed hold global value by pointing to our collective embeddedness and embodiedness.

This essay surveys two early captivity narratives - the classical one by Mary Rowlandson (1682) and a lesser known text by John Gyles (1736) - alongside contemporary examples of the genre that relate the stories of American captives in Iraq and Colombia.