**FEMALE AND UNFREE IN AMERICA:
CAPTIVITY AND SLAVE NARRATIVES**

LOREDANA BERCUCI
West University of Timișoara

Abstract: This study analyses two seminal American memoirs that depict female captivity: *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682) by Mary Rowlandson and Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). My aim is to discuss, using the tools of Critical Race Theory, the intersections of gender and race, focusing on how the two women's femininity, as well as their individuality, is linked to Christianity and motherhood.

Keywords: captivity narrative, Christianity, motherhood, race, slave narrative

1. Introduction

Written almost two hundred years apart, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682) by Mary Rowlandson and Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) are seminal works of their respective genres. Both memoirs worked to redefine what was understood by the term "female writing" as well as "American writing" in their time and, being bestsellers banking on sentimentalism, paved the way for the success of later popular genres. The two works, of course, also differ radically.

The first memoir, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682) by Mary Rowlandson, represents what is known as a captivity narrative. Captivity narratives are accounts by individuals, preponderantly women, detailing their capture by so-called "uncivilized" enemies. They were modeled on conversion and spiritual narratives, often referencing Puritan and Calvinist theology. Additionally, they are defined by sensationalist prose with sentimentalist and frontier adventure elements, which increased their popular appeal. Their immense popularity contributed to the emerging capitalist book market.

These early American narratives reveal that, contrary to what earlier historiographies suggested about white settlement in North America, the fashioning of the hegemonic American identity was influenced less by male-dominated armed-conflict scenes and more by cross-cultural encounters also involving women and children (Namias 1993:1). According to Christopher Castiglia,

In these captivity romances, women participate in creating the cultural mythology of the American wilderness, a literary realm that allows white women to wrestle with their placement in the new nation. (Castiglia 1996:2)

In the process of creating myths which would later support the new nation, frontier experiences such as those described by captivity narratives also laid bare the settlers' own gender relations (cf. Namias 1993:1). As such, white European women, through these stories, constructed their identity by showcasing their resourcefulness and adaptability to the harsh frontier conditions in such a way that it contributed both to early ideas about what it meant to be an American, while at the same time redefining the meaning of womanhood.

The frontier experience played a great role in the American imaginary as one of the rationales for the belief in American exceptionalism. Famously describing the American

character as it was shaped by the frontier, Frederick Jackson Turner (1893), in his essay “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” states that

That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom – these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier.

Women of the frontier, as Americans, made claim to these traits as well, which led to the transformation of gender roles so that white women in America were allowed to show individuation and agency in a manner in which it was not permitted in other contexts in that period.

Almost two centuries later, slave narratives drew on captivity narratives, as well as on other genres, such as spiritual liberation or religious conversion narratives (requisitioned by Methodist and Baptist publishers), travel narratives, autobiography, or political commentary (Gould 2007:14-15), thus appealing to many types of audiences and contributing, through their popularity to the strengthening of the discourse of abolitionism. By following the tropes of captivity narratives, slaves lay claim to American citizenship (Pierce 2007:84). The purpose of the slave narrative, however, was obviously radically different from that of captivity narratives. Whereas captivity narratives claimed the racial superiority of white Christians and functioned as propaganda for both westward expansion and the independence of the new American nation in the 18th century, slave narratives aimed to convince their audience that slavery was a grave moral wrong:

First and foremost, the slave narrative is a text with a purpose: the end of slavery. The slave narrative is a key artifact in the global campaign to end first the slave trade (the practice of transporting slaves across international waters), then colonial slavery (in British Caribbean colonies like Jamaica), and finally US slavery. (Fisch 2007:2)

As such, the slave narrative was a testimony to the torments of slavery, describing gruesome ordeals suffered by the protagonists and narrators of the memoirs. Often, their life story was the authors’ most valuable possession (Carretta 2007: 57).

While captivity narratives were more often than not written by women, slave narratives written by men were given more authority at first. Along with Frederick Douglass’ *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845), the most frequently read slave narrative is *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) by Harriet Ann Jacobs, but the latter was at first not considered to be authentic, on the one hand, because Lydia Maria Child, an abolitionist known for her sentimental novels, edited Jacobs’ work, and on the other, because its author was a woman. As Rafia Zafar puts it,

faced with the ‘double negative’ of black race and female gender, like Wheatley before her and Hurston after her, [Jacobs] had to contend with a skeptical readership that said her work could not be ‘genuine’ because of her emphasis on the domestic, her ‘melodramatic’ style, and her unwillingness to depict herself as an avatar of self-reliance. (Zafar 1996:29)

Eventually, archival research by Jean Fagan Yellin (1981) redeemed the memoir by proving its authenticity.

Considering all of the above, I seek, in this paper, to answer the following questions: Which elements do slave narratives borrow from captivity narratives and how do these contribute to the construction of black femininity in the 19th century? How is white femininity shown? To do so, I will read the two aforementioned texts, *A Narrative of the Captivity and*

Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson (1682) by Mary Rowlandson and Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), through the lens of Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies. I will show that slave narratives borrow elements related to motherhood, faith, and resourcefulness from captivity narratives in order to create a conceptual space for black femininity in 19th century USA. While captivity narratives equate Christianity with whiteness, slave narratives equate it with humanity.

2. Method

The study of race in general, and of whiteness in particular, pertains to the specialized fields of critical theory called Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies. Critical Race Theory is a framework borrowed from the social sciences (especially legal and education studies) used in American Studies to apply the insights of critical theory, post-colonialism, and feminist radical theory to race relations in the United States. According to Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2012), Critical Race Theory is based on six basic assumptions, although individual scholars vary considerably in pinpointing how these relate to racism. The assumptions they identify are the following: racism is ordinary; white privilege is pervasive; race is socially constructed; racialization happens differentially; intersectionality and anti-essentialism are desirable; and the voice-of-color thesis is valid. Ordinary racism refers to the fact that racism is all-pervasive and not aberrational in American culture (Delgado and Stefancic 2012:27). White privilege is constituted through the American system which promotes the ascendancy of white over color, both physically and materially (Bell 1979:523). The social construction thesis is the idea that reality is understood through a series of jointly constructed assumptions which form the basis of our knowledge about the world, including our understanding of race (Delgado and Stefancic 2012:8). Differential racialization refers to how distinct minority groups are perceived by dominant society as separate races, each with its own characteristics and power dynamics (Delgado and Stefancic 2012:9). Intersectionality and anti-essentialism mean that "everyone has potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties, and allegiances" (Delgado and Stefancic 2012:10).

Similarly, Critical Whiteness Studies, as a subfield of Critical Race Theory, proceeds from the same assumptions, but focuses on whiteness as an object of investigation. As early as 1920, W.E.B. Du Bois stated that "The discovery of a personal whiteness among the world's peoples is a very modern thing, – a nineteenth and twentieth century matter, indeed." In spite of this, scholarly inquiries into whiteness are quite recent. This relatively new field examines how, ever since colonial America, white, indigenous, and black identities developed in relation to slavery, colonial settlement, citizenship, and industrial labor.

Racial tensions have defined the history and culture of the United States since its inception. With the institution of slavery in 1619 in Virginia, the concept of *whiteness* was redefined in a specific American way. In this study, I proceed from the assumption that the division between white and other races, as it surfaces throughout the history of the United States, is the result of slavery, even though racism, in general, preceded transatlantic slave trade.

3. A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson (1682)

Mary White Rowlandson's *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682) describes the settlement of Lancaster on February 10, 1675, when it was attacked by Native Americans. The attack resulted in ten victims on the side of the settlers and many of the survivors were taken captive. Among the captives were Mary Rowlandson and her three children. She was released in exchange for an 80\$ ransom after 11 weeks.

The author's account of her captivity, one of the first best sellers in American history, functions as a testimony of Native American life, whose exoticization by European settlers in America accounts for some of its success. Rowlandson describes, for instance, the culinary practices of her captors: their preference for horse meat, boiled deer blood, broth and their methods of cooking. She also describes their settlements (wigwams), their weapons (arrows with flax and hemp, set on fire) and their medical practices (dressing wounds with oak leaves). Native rituals and dress are portrayed minutely as well (dances, ceremonial wear and jewelry). However, these descriptions are colored by racial slurs and misrepresentations.

The negative descriptions of Native life are justified by the narrator as stemming from their non-adherence to Christianity. The Christian faith in the book is associated with both humanity and beauty:

But when they came near there was a vast difference between the lovely faces of Christians and the foul looks of those heathen, which much damped my spirits again. (Rowlandson 1682)

In this context, when Rowlandson speaks of "the lovely faces of Christians", she also associates beauty and humanity with fair complexions. To stress the difference between her and her captors, she frequently puts on spectacles of faith, as for instance when her 'master' throws away her Bible.

Nevertheless, the captive often admits that her captors treat her well overall, assigning their qualities to the mercy of God:

And I cannot but admire at the wonderful power and goodness of God to me, in that though I was gone from home and met with all sorts of Indians, and those I had no knowledge of, and there being no Christian soul near me, yet not one of them offered the least imaginable miscarriage to me. (Rowlandson 1682)

In fact, she goes so far as to say she prefers her captors to the French, whom she despises in spite of their Christian faith. The harshness of her existence is caused by the conditions in which her captives are accustomed to living, as well as by the constant threat of invasion by the British that forces the travelers into perilous situations. As such, the narrative reveals the complexity of inter- and intra-race relations in the seventeenth century.

Whereas Rowlandson acknowledges the fair behavior of her 'masters', she fails to observe that the role of the captive in Native cultures was quite different from prisoners of war in European cultures. Female captives were almost always adopted into the tribe. As June Namias shows, while some captives were taken for ransom and men were sometimes tortured,

[a]doption was part of a wider social and cultural practice and, in the case of the many northeastern Indians, indicates the importance of women in the system of warfare. In the colonial, Northeast, especially among the Iroquois, Hurons, and Delawares, for those who made it through the ordeal, a new family was often waiting. The choice of captives was left to the women of the village. To assuage their loss of a brother, husband, or son, they could choose among male or female captives to adopt. Either sex was considered a desirable substitute for a lost relative. (Namias 1993:4)

Rowlandson describes this process even though she does not name it. She lives with her adoptive family, they exchange gifts and she is paid for her labor by both her family and the rest of the tribe (she knits in exchange for food and other goods). Essentially, an attempt to integrate her into the community is apparent.

Motherhood, which seems to be the center of Rowlandson's identity, is associated with Christian values as well. The narrator offers a pained account of the death of her daughter (who is given a respectful burial by the Natives in her absence) right after they are captured. However, while she often preaches the duties of motherhood, she seems neglectful of her children. She

does not mention her other two captive children until she meets them by mistake. As a captive, she is often allowed to travel freely, but she rarely visits her children. Finally, her husband ransoms her first and then the children. In addition, she sees motherhood as being so connected to the Christian faith that she does not understand why, when the child of her captive family dies, the mother grieves. This shows that she perceives herself as radically different from her captor, and not even the shared experience of grieving a dead offspring leads her to identify with Native women.

Putting herself before her children is explained by Rowlandson as necessary in such dire circumstances. These circumstances allow her to also take control of her situation and gain independence and self-sufficiency in always devising plans to escape her captors. Additionally, Rowlandson shows herself to be quite observant of her new situation, producing interpretations of customs and political state of affairs that, biased as they are, would not have been considered proper of British women in the seventeenth century. At the same time, in waiting to be ransomed by her husband, Rowlandson is not threatening to the patriarchal system. In her situation as captive on the frontier, she secures agency for herself that would not have been possible elsewhere, establishing a new model of received American womanhood.

4. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)

Published shortly before abolition in the United States, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1862) tells the story of Linda Brent, a pseudonym under which the memoir was first published. Born as a slave in Edenton, North Carolina in 1813, Linda Brent spends her teenage years trying to escape her owner, Dr. Flint, who was making advances towards her. In the hopes of gaining protection, Linda enters a romantic relation with a white neighbor, Mr. Sands. As a result, two mixed-race children are born: Benjamin and Ellen. In order to procure the freedom of her children, Linda spends seven years hiding in her grandmother's attic before escaping to the North, where she eventually becomes free.

The memoir is focused not so much on the events that occur during Linda's captivity, but is a sort of psychodrama in which the narrator comments on her status as a slave, on the conditions and morality of slavery, and especially on the particular fate that female slaves had. Akin to the captivity narrative discussed above, the narrator draws on Christian values to persuade her readers that slavery is a moral wrong and, as such, its existence in Christian life is absurd. The Christian faith is thus seen as an elevating attribute, which can even hold the possibility of absolution for slave holders. For instance, speaking of a female slave owner in her town, Linda says the following:

The young lady was very pious, and there was some reality in her religion. She taught her slaves to lead pure lives, and wished them to enjoy the fruit of their own industry. Her religion was not a garb put on for Sunday, and laid aside till Sunday returned again. (Jacobs 1891)

The qualification in this excerpt, i.e. "some reality", is evident throughout the novel with regards to the wives of male slaveholders. Linda at times identifies with white women in the memoir, showing them capable of commiserating with her on the basis of their shared gender, especially as it is connected to motherhood. At other times, however, the wives of slave holders seem to exchange places with their husbands in a manner which blurs the difference between their identities. This is the case with Mrs. Flint, who, in fits of jealousy, terrorizes Linda by pretending she is her husband at night. The fluidity exhibited here at once suggests participation of white women in the violence of hegemonic whiteness and their subjugated role in their ability to perform the role of the men only furtively.

In most cases throughout the book, it is shown that slaveholders, in the act of owning slaves, lose their moral superiority in spite of being Christians. Speaking of slaveholders' attitudes towards female slaves as particularly damning, the memoir not only illuminates gendered aspects of slavery that are almost totally erased by historical documents, in which slaves appear as property, and therefore as ungendered. For example, in *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America* (1930), collected by Elizabeth Donnan, slaves are rarely referred to by name, or are assigned random names, and their gender is almost never specified, except to account for body mass. Regarding this, Hortense Spillers states that

[u]nder these conditions, one is neither female, nor male, as both subjects are taken into "account" as quantities. The female in "Middle Passage," as the apparently smaller physical mass, occupies "less room" in a directly translatable money economy. But she is, nevertheless, quantifiable by the same rules of accounting as her male counterpart. (Spillers 1987:71)

As such, what appears to gender the female slave body, as is suggested in Jacobs' memoir, is the gendered violence that is performed against it.

One type of gendered violence is, of course, the sexual violation by the slaveholder. As Jacobs' memoir (1891) states, "[w]omen are considered of no value, unless they continually increase their owner's stock. They are put on a par with animals." Slaves were seen as female only in as much as they could supply the proliferation of property through the birth of new slaves. A facet of this is what Spillers (1987:66) calls "irresistible, destructive sexuality", in which the captive becomes an expression of "otherness." In the memoir, this othering of the female slave in this manner is depicted as an affront to Christian values, which equate chastity with purity and worthiness, as is evident in the following excerpt:

But, O, ye happy women, whose purity has been sheltered from childhood, who have been free to choose the objects of your affection, whose homes are protected by law, do not judge the poor desolate slave girl too severely! If slavery had been abolished, I, also, could have married the man of my choice; I could have had a home shielded by the laws; (Jacobs 1891)

The concept of motherhood in this context comes into conflict with the role imposed on enslaved women as enhancers of the value of property. Early racist studies of the African-American family structure, such as "The Moynihan Report", argued that slavery forced the African-American community into a matriarchal structure that allegedly made it "unsuccessful" in American culture (Moynihan 1965:75). First, the female slave was expected to perform field as well as domestic labor, which blurred the boundaries between men's and women's work. Second, women were more likely not to be separated from their children, so that black male children grew up fatherless, with only the mother as an authority figure based solely on kinship. Both of these realities emasculated black male slaves and thus rendered them useless in American society after the abolition of slavery, concludes Moynihan in his report. As bell hooks (1981:15-24) explains, this theory is based on a sexist interpretation of the realities of the enslaved woman's existence. The report's perspective exhibits an obvious devaluation of femaleness in claiming that slavery affected black men more by robbing them of the right to assert patriarchal power. It also fails to understand the nature of motherhood under slavery.

Spillers (1987:73) shows that, under the conditions of slavery, "the offspring of the female does not 'belong' to the Mother, nor is s/he 'related' to the 'owner,' though the latter 'possesses' it, and in the African-American instance, often fathered it, and, as often, without whatever benefit of patrimony". As a consequence of this, concepts like *kinship*, *relationship* and *motherhood* lose their meaning, "since [they] can be invaded at any given moment by property relations" (Spillers 1987:73). By not permitting these concepts to be applied to them as a right, the enslaved are not allowed to see themselves as human.

In Jacobs' memoir, Linda's identity, especially her identity as a woman, centers on her relations with her family and with her community. She sacrifices herself in order to obtain the freedom of her children. Furthermore, throughout the memoir, there are very positive depictions of maternal figures, such as her mother, her grandmother, her first mistress and her employers. Motherhood, along with the betrayal of male slaveholders, is seen as a trait that unifies women across races:

The young wife soon learns that the husband in whose hands she has placed her happiness pays no regard to his marriage vows. Children of every shade of complexion play with her own fair babies, and too well she knows that they are born unto him of his own household. [...] Though this bad institution deadens the moral sense, even in white women, to a fearful extent, it is not altogether extinct. (Jacobs 1891)

Thus, the memoir makes a claim to universal womanhood by appealing to the common fate of all women, regardless of race, at the hand of patriarchal power.

In addition to her identity as a mother, Linda's behavior showcases the relations forged within the African-American community as a result of slavery and of abolition effort. The importance of the community sometimes even seems to trump that of family. Once she is in the North, for example, Linda often parts with her children, sending Ellen to boarding school and Benny to learn a trade while she travels to England. She thus fights to educate them – lack of education being seen as a way of upholding slavery, and harming them, as well as the cause of the African-American community.

While Linda stakes her claim to womanhood (and consequently to personhood) through motherhood, her identification with white women is qualified by her adherence to the African-American community, where gender functions differently. Talking about how she had consistently outsmarted Flint, Linda says:

Anxious as I was, I felt a gleam of satisfaction when I saw him. Thus far I had outwitted him, and I triumphed over it. Who can blame slaves for being cunning? They are constantly compelled to resort to it. It is the only weapon of the weak and oppressed against the strength of their tyrants. (Jacobs 1891)

What she calls 'cunning' is a strong will for survival and an independence that would not have been allowed white women under the patriarchal rules of the nineteenth century, far removed from the attenuating circumstance of harsh frontier conditions. Linda exhibits the same traits throughout the book, showing herself as well educated and resourceful in navigating big cities like New York or Philadelphia, and in finding employment.

It seems that Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) moves in two opposite directions at the same time. On the one hand, it makes a claim to humanity and personhood by showing the link between white and black women through motherhood. On the other hand, it takes a stab at patriarchal structures in the display of female independence and resourcefulness whose cause it attributed to the conditions of captivity. The latter move is present in Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative too, but the racial situation was reversed. It may well be that the lack of popularity of Jacobs' memoir at first stems precisely from its attempt to strike at hegemonic structures from two sides.

5. Conclusions

A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson (1682), like other captivity narratives, makes space for female identities in colonial America and in the Early Republic by conforming to Puritan definitions of femininity as maternal and merciful. Rowlandson, as a white captive, constructs her identity as an American by conforming to norms of Christian feeling on the one hand, and showcasing self-sufficiency on the other. In this

manner, white female captives gain unprecedented agency in American cultures as writers of these narratives.

By comparison, Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) builds on the legacy of female captivity narratives and creates a space for black femininity by portraying exemplary motherhood, and especially by claiming "true" Christian feeling as the defining trait of humanity. Unlike *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682), Jacobs reads female gender identity across racial lines through motherhood, but she also points to how white women are gendered differently. As such, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) represents a decidedly critical update to the captivity genre.

Acknowledgements

Publishing current paper was financed through Entrepreneurial Education and Professional Counseling for Social and Human Sciences PhD and Postdoctoral Researchers to ensure knowledge transfer Project, financed through Human Capital Programme (ATrIUM, POCU380/6/13/123343).

References

- Bell, Derrick. 1979. "Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest Convergence Dilemma." *Harvard Law Review*, no. 93, pp. 518-533.
- Carretta, Vincent. 2007. "Olaudah Equiano: African British abolitionist and founder of the African American slave narrative" in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*. A. Fisch (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Castiglia, Christopher. 1996. *Bound and determined: captivity, culture-crossing, and white womanhood from Mary Rowlandson to Patty Hearst*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. 2012. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. New York: NYU Press.
- Donnan, Elizabeth. 1932. *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*; 4 vols. Washington, D.C.: The Carnegie Institution of Washington.
- Douglas, Frederick. 1845. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* [online]. Available: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23/23-h/23-h.htm> [2020, 7 December].
- Du Bois, W. E. B. 1920. *Darkwater*. [online]. Available: <http://www.webdubois.org/wdb-darkwater.html> [2019, September 14]
- Fisch, Audrey. 2007. *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gould, Philip. 2007. "The rise, development, and circulation of the slave narrative" in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*. A. Fisch (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- hooks, bell. 1981. *Ain't I a Woman? Black women and feminism*. Boston: South End Press.
- Jacobs, Harriet. 1861. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* [online]. Available: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11030/11030-h/11030-h.htm> [2019, September 13]
- Moynihan, Daniel Patrick. 1965. *The Moynihan Report* [online]. Available: <https://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/webid-meynihan.htm> [2019, September 13]
- Namias, June. 1993. *White Captives. Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Pierce, Yolanda. 2007. "Redeeming bondage: the captivity narrative and the spiritual autobiography in the African American slave narrative tradition" in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*. A. Fisch (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rowlandson, Mary. 1682. *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* [online]. Available: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/851/851-h/851-h.htm> [2019, September 13]
- Spillers, Hortense. 1987. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics*, no. 17 (2), pp. 64-81.
- Turner, Jackson. 1893. *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* [online]. Available: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22994/22994-h/22994-h.htm> [2019, September 13]
- Yellin, Jean Fagan. 1981. "Written by Herself: Harriet Jacobs's Slave Narrative." *American Literature*, no. 53, pp. 479-486.

Zafar, Rafia. 1991. "Capturing the Captivity: African Americans among the Puritans," *MELUS*, no. 17 (29), pp. 19-35.

Note on the author

Loredana BERCUCI is a researcher in the English department at the West University of Timișoara in Romania, where she also teaches. She holds a PhD in American Studies and is currently working on a postdoctoral project dealing with race relations (representations of whiteness) in the United States. Her main research interests are trauma, critical theory, Critical Race Theory, narratology, contemporary American fiction and ESP.