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Christine Kim

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Résumé de l'article

Gabriel Dumont's Gabriel Dumont Speaks and Harry Robinson's "Captive in an English Circus" are two very different Native-authored texts that counter the dominant narrative of nineteenth-century Canadian nationhood by offering alternative perspectives on the Northwest Rebellions. Locating these texts within the conventions of captivity narratives raises questions about the social significance of the genre by invoking both the politics of form and the form of politics. The two works critically distance the reader from the containment strategies of the captivity genre and reveal its complicity with the imperial expansionist project.

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Signifying the Nation: Gabriel Dumont, Harry Robinson, and the Canadian Captivity Narrative

Christine Kim

Gabriel Dumont's *Gabriel Dumont Speaks* and Harry Robinson's "Captive in an English Circus" are two very different Native-authored texts that counter the dominant narrative of nineteenth-century Canadian nationhood by offering alternative perspectives on the Northwest Rebellions. *Gabriel Dumont Speaks* is a transcription of Dumont's memoirs, recounted in 1903, that includes an account of the 1885 Métis Rebellion. It describes the events leading up to the capture and hanging of Louis Riel and Dumont's efforts to avoid a similar fate. These memoirs, translated into English by Michael Barnholden and published for the first time in 1993, are Dumont's second published account of the Métis uprising.[1] Harry Robinson's "Captive in an English Circus," a told-to story that was recorded and transcribed by ethnographer Wendy Wickwire, is set in 1886, a year after Canada's Northwest Rebellions. While Robinson's story was first published in 1989 in *Write it on Your Heart*, it was created long before its publication date.[2] It shares with *Gabriel Dumont Speaks* the subject of the 1885 Northwest Rebellions and a critique of colonial strategies used to implement the modern political nation. They have much in common with the genre of captivity narratives because these Native-authored texts describe historical practices of captivity and suggest that nineteenth-century discourses of imprisonment and progress are tools of symbolic violence. It is productive to read Dumont's and Robinson's texts within this North American tradition because it sets out the aesthetic and political terms used to inscribe Canadian nationhood into social memory and correspondingly neglect Native and Métis nationhood.

Recent studies of captivity narratives engage with the particular ways in which the literary conventions of this genre inscribe gendered subjectivity, racial alterity, and national identity onto the cultural consciousness.

The basic plot of the captivity narrative has remained fairly constant over three centuries: "an innocent woman and her children [are] attacked at a frontier homestead, carried away by savages, and subjected to violence, privation, and humiliation, before finally being rescued or ransomed or escaping to the white community" (Sayre 5). However, there have been significant alterations to the language in which these plots have been rendered. Contemporary critics have probed these changes to further their understandings of the colonial project, white femininity, and the act of literary interpretation.[3] This essay resituates this genre within a broader literary and cultural context that includes Native-authored texts about captivity and the Northwest Rebellions in order to rethink the politics of Canadian nationalism as well as literary genres. Works such as *Gabriel Dumont Speaks* and "Captive in an English Circus" are not typically considered captivity narratives because they critique rather than uphold the imperial logic governing the literary and social economy of the form. Yet, it is precisely because they are ideologically invested in its literary conventions that Robinson's and Dumont's texts should now be considered within this literary and cultural context. Locating these texts within the conventions of captivity narratives raises questions about the social significance of the genre by invoking both the politics of form and the form of politics.

Roy Pearce's pioneering article "The Significances of the Captivity Narrative" (1947) argues for the recognition of multiple genres of captivity narratives by historicizing their numerous reworkings. He questions the logic that informs the dominant impulse to make a "single genre out of the sort of popular form which shapes and reshapes itself according to varying immediate cultural needs" (1). While more recent criticism tends to read captivity narratives as part of a single but evolving form, it does not entirely neglect Pearce's insight. Critics such as Hennig Cohen, James Levernier, and Pauline Turner Strong, for example, recognize that these texts are shaped by their particular social contexts for ideological purposes. Pearce's argument draws attention to the way genres operate as what Fredric Jameson calls "literary *institutions*, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact" (106). Pearce's emphasis on the numerous reshapings of generic conventions points out that "as texts free themselves more and more from an immediate performance situation, it becomes ever more difficult to enforce a given generic rule on the readers" (Jameson 106). Tracing the captivity narrative as it has developed within the American tradition historicizes these generic terms. Given the

overlaps between national uses of this narrative form, situating Canadian captivity narratives within this broader framework of literary history is a productive means of understanding the terms of the nineteenth-century Canadian social contract.[4]

For many North American readers, the most familiar early captivity narrative is usually that of Captain John Smith and Pocahontas. Smith's tale is part of a body of narratives dating back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that describes the adventures of New World explorers who had been captured by indigenous peoples. Reading these narratives against each other reveals multiple and contradictory images of Natives. In their introduction to a collection of captivity narratives, James Levernier and Hennig Cohen explain that

> stereotypes of the Indian emerged when colonizations of the New World succeeded exploration and it became necessary to have fixed views so that the Indians could be dealt with. These stereotypes varied with the aims of the colonizing nations and were based on preconceptions about how they hoped Indians would behave. The earliest captivity stories reflect these preconceptions and in turn were used as evidence to confirm and hence to perpetuate them. (xv-xvi)

That the spectrum of images includes representations of Natives as simple and innocent as well as barbaric and treacherous makes it clear that the narrative of first contact was under constant revision. Indeed, there is even debate over Smith's motives for recounting his narrative because he may have "fabricated the episode to draw public attention to himself and his New World exploits" and return to the good graces of the crown (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 60).

In the seventeenth century, the captivity narrative often served as a religious vehicle used to reinforce spiritual teachings. A popular form for the Puritans, narratives such as Mary Rowlandson's "A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson" (1682) understood capture by Natives as a trial put forth by God. The captivity narrative returned to more secular concerns in the eighteenth century when it served mainly to justify land appropriation through the circulation of negative images of Natives. Instead of functioning as a pro-settler fable, "the captivity narratives became almost exclusively a device for anti-Indian propaganda" (Levernier and Cohen xxi-xxii). Following this period, captivity became a trope in fiction and visual art, forms that made fewer claims than the early narratives to historical accuracy. This abridged literary history of American captivity narratives suggests that over time, the

conventions of the genre have been used to unify individual accounts in different ways and for different political purposes. The only constant among various developments in the genre's history is that it posits ways, whether in imperialist, religious, or capitalist terms, of understanding captivity.

In nineteenth-century Canadian literature, the genre works to consolidate individual captivity accounts like those by Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney within larger narratives of the nation as a means of promoting the imperial project. These two white women were taken prisoner by Natives after their husbands were killed at Frog Lake and were the subjects of sensationalized newspaper accounts published for an audience fascinated by threats to feminine virtue.[5] Gowanlock's reference in her preface to the "many conflicting statements in the public press regarding my capture and treatment while with the Indians" acknowledges these competing stories and suggests that *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear* will provide the truth (3). However, as Sarah Carter notes in her introduction to the 1999 reprint, "The stories presented in *Two Months* differ in significant respects from some of the statements the women made immediately upon their release" (xxxii). According to the initial accounts given by Gowanlock and Delaney when they first returned to Fort Pitt, they had been treated well and remained unharmed. Yet their testimonies contained in *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear* failed to counteract rumours of the brutality of Native captors. Just as in the eighteenth-century American captivity narrative, these Canadian captivity narratives generally depicted Natives in negative terms to placate settlers' consciences for displacing them from their land.

Gowanlock and Delaney's text provides an imaginary means of containing the danger of interactions between Native and non-Natives that would engender a larger cultural crisis. Sarah Carter's *Capturing Women* discusses the location of individual experiences within a larger cultural narrative about the conflict between civilized settlers and primitive Natives. Since generic constraints are used to ensure continuity between stories of captivity, in most nineteenth-century colonial captivity narratives

> contented settlers were ruthlessly torn from the sacred precincts of hearth and home, dragged through the wilderness, and made to suffer indignities, cruelty, and privation before returning to the sanctity of their own civilization. … There were the conventional descriptions of the Indians, the men being depicted as wild, savage, villainous, and brutal, while the women were overworked drudges. Similarly, convention dictated that the white female protagonists be portrayed as

> delicate and domestic symbols of purity and home, defenceless and powerless without protective white males. (*Capturing* 114)

Furthermore, the majority of captivity narratives were written by women because the social perception of femininity heightened the sense of the captive as vulnerable, the masculine rescuers as heroic, and the Natives as savage. The purpose of the captivity narrative within this specific historical and geographic setting is clear, given that "protecting the virtue of white women became a pretext for suppressing and controlling the indigenous population. The threat of real or imagined violence against white women was a rationale for securing white control, for clarifying boundaries between people" (*Capturing* 15). Terry Goldie's argument that the cultural construction of Native peoples occurs within a "certain semiotic field, a field that provides the boundaries within which the images of the indigene function" is relevant here as the captivity narrative can be grasped as a specific example of such a discursive territory (9). These captivity narratives valorized white women's virtue and, in the process of doing so, promoted the separation of Native and non-Native in signification and in reality.

While Gowanlock and Delaney's testimonial is often held up as a paradigmatic example of the Canadian captivity narrative, other nineteenth-century texts that engage with similar issues, like Robinson's "Captive in an English Circus" and Dumont's *Gabriel Dumont Speaks*, have been excluded from this genre.[6] Jameson observes that while individual texts may contest generic boundaries and thus transform them, "older generic categories do not, for all that, die out, but persist in the half-life of subliterary genres of mass culture" (107). Similar generic transformations can also occur within a single historical moment as a response to radically disparate social and cultural positions of enunciation. I focus on the general neglect of these Native-authored texts as part of the captivity narrative tradition to ask what motivates this refusal to draw upon its generic conventions as a way of reading these texts. If Jameson is correct in arguing that interpretation occurs through the act of "rewriting a given text in terms of a particular master code," then what is at stake in this refusal to "rewrite" these Native-authored narratives within an obvious literary genealogy (10)? While Dumont and Robinson may not necessarily have been familiar with the literary form of captivity narratives, they were clearly familiar with the reality of colonial practices of captivity. Their narratives contradict the imperial logic of the genre and the ways it deploys captivity as a signifier to legitimize colonial practices at the expense of historical accuracy. Dumont's and Robinson's manipulations of generic conventions violate the terms of the captivity narrative's social contract. To mobilize the captivity narrative

to promote counter-hegemonic narratives is also to interrogate dominant representations of nineteenth-century Canada and expose the ways in which captivity was also an imperial practice.

Dumont's and Robinson's texts reinvest the conventions of the captivity narrative with anti-imperial sentiment, and in doing so, broaden the meanings associated with captivity in its nineteenth-century manifestations. These narratives work specifically to counter other narratives that use the Northwest Rebellions to legitimize the Canadian nation. The suppression of the Native and Métis uprisings at Frog Lake and Duck Lake by the Canadian government is often considered a triumph for Canadian settlement. The quick deployment of troops to the uprisings by rail signified the realization of the modern political nation as armed bodies were used to reach a political solution.[7] While the Native and Métis rebellions at Frog and Duck Lake were often referred to as massacres by the press, emphasizing the deaths of settlers, the speedy transport of soldiers in retaliation made the slaughter of Natives possible; this historical fact was underreported. The dominant narrative of the Northwest Rebellions constructs the triumph of Canadian troops over the Native and Métis uprisings as an integral part of the imperialist expansionist project through linked discourses of European progress and Native savagery. The colonial quelling of the Northwest Rebellions declares the authority of the Canadian state to colonize the First Nations but also its own domination by the colonial power of Britain.

Gabriel Dumont Speaks reworks the generic conventions of the captivity narrative by discussing the capture of Riel and Dumont's efforts to avoid capture. It opens at the end of the Métis uprising with the Canadian government calling for Riel and Dumont to turn themselves in. Dumont successfully evades capture but is unsuccessful in his attempt to rescue Riel. The memoir then weaves various episodes in Dumont's life together with events preceding the battle. If, as Gordon M. Sayre claims, "the typical captivity plot served ideologically to invert the true terms of the colonial invasion," then *Gabriel Dumont Speaks* can be read as a failed captivity narrative (6). By the nineteenth century, the captivity narrative in Canada articulated the goals of colonialism. However, Dumont's engagement with the subject of captivity suggests that the genre can be manipulated to express other relations to nationhood. His narrative posits the Northwest Rebellions not as signifiers of the triumph of the Canadian nation, but as signifiers of the struggles of the Native and Métis nations to resist colonialism. The captivity narrative is thus transformed into an articulation of struggle rather than victory.

In colonial captivity narratives, settlers are typically written as vic-

tims threatened by villainous Natives, a division that shifts blame onto Natives to justify the project of imperialism. While captivity narratives typically demonize Natives in order to justify colonial claims and practices, Dumont's narrative interrogates the gap between colonial law and natural justice. Dumont implicitly questions the ethics of the Canadian government by discussing military tactics used by the Canadian forces against the Métis. He challenges their use of

> exploding balls … which was against the basic principles of war. You wanted to score a direct hit, and temporarily disable, but not necessarily kill, the enemy soldiers. A simple bullet wound would disable a man and his wound would get better, while the wound of an exploding ball caused internal wounds and broke bones, and was always deadly. The government troops committed a huge crime against humanity and against the rights of the men of the Métis nation. (*Gabriel* 70-71)

The language of this historical account makes it clear that the Métis viewed themselves as a nation governed by social rules and a code of ethics. Dumont suggests the tactics used by the government to institute its nation are savage and barbarous, and he implies that the actual mission of the colonial project was to replace social justice with unethical practice. He refutes colonial representations of the Northwest as pure wilderness and destabilizes the cultural logic of the civilizing project.

Gabriel Dumont Speaks also invokes nineteenth-century discourses of domestic femininity, a key element of the captivity narrative, to frame the wife as an ideal to be protected at all costs. In the critical moments when the battle is waning and people are fleeing, Dumont ensures his wife's welfare:

> First I realized these were free horses, then I realized they were Parenteau's, so I caught another mare and let the stallion go. I put my wife on one of the mares but she had never ridden bareback, so I had to lead her horse with a rope. On the other mare I put a half-bag of flour that I had been carrying when I was leading the two horses. The stallion followed the two mares and wouldn't leave them. Finally I had to hit him hard with a stick to stop him. We camped at the northeast edge of Belle Prairie. We spent the morning in the woods where we ate breakfast. I left my wife hidden there and went on foot to find Riel. (74)

This passage works within the structure of the captivity genre to undo the image of Native women as drudges and Native men as savages; Dumont

chivalrously protects his wife from the police. Not only are the roles of victim and victimizer reversed, but white feminine virtue is also displaced as the centre of discursive and historical struggles as the Métis woman becomes the symbol of purity safeguarded by cultural boundaries. These textual strategies, however, are more than simple rewritings that reverse the captivity narrative's ideological underpinnings. In captivity narratives written by non-Natives, the threat to femininity is often less a real one and more the product of social hysteria; however, Native narratives about captivity declare that the threat to Native women was always present. In this respect, *Gabriel Dumont Speaks* upholds certain gender conventions as Native women, like white women, are represented as helpless without male protection.

Gabriel Dumont Speaks further signals the failure of the genre to unify representations of the historical moment by interrupting his story of the Northwest Rebellions to counter a rumour that he was in Europe performing with Buffalo Bill. The text invokes discourses of the spectacular when Dumont states that he "worked for Buffalo Bill, but only in America, and that was before 1889" (36). This layering of modes of captivity disrupts the linear narrative of progress that underlies the captivity narrative in nineteenth-century Canada by making paradigmatic associations with the larger cultural parameters of captivity. This act also suggests that even though Dumont, who was billed in the Wild West show as "the Hero of the Halfbreed Rebellion," chose to perform and was remunerated for his work, his narrative can be read in relation to historical factors such as the limited opportunities for Natives in North America after the "Indian wars" and the restrictions imposed on Natives by the colonial government (Barnholden 7). While the Wild West framework of the show may have been exploitative, there were definite material advantages for Natives who were employed by it.[8] The show also provided an alternative to the reservations, one that was necessary as by "the nineteenth century, officials increasingly thought of reserves as social laboratories where Indians could be educated, christianized and prepared for assimilation" (Francis 203).

Canadian and American settler audiences were entertained by both the Wild West spectacle and captivity narratives of white women who had narrowly escaped desecration by Native men. The semiotic violence justified and explained the actual violence of their own governmental practices and vice versa. Attention was drawn away from the material practice of corralling Natives onto reserves through the symbolic containment of Natives within images of "Indians," thus doubly invoking the captivity

paradigm.[9] It also posed a contradiction, as the imperial project articulated by the conventions of the captivity narrative and its rhetoric of ethics is at odds with the logic of performance and profit mobilized by Buffalo Bill's spectacles of captivity. While both capitalism and imperialism are systems designed to generate profit, the latter justifies this practice through a logic of morality, while the former views profit as justification in itself.

While the Buffalo Bill show specifically stages skirmishes that occurred within America, that the show frequently travelled to Canada and abroad suggests that its symbolic currency spoke in both national and international terms. The market for the cultural translation of frontier history stems from the desire of a colonial market to consume performances of imperialism. Cody even packed up his show and took it to England where it performed as part of the American Exhibition for the Queen's Jubilee in 1887. Dumont states that he was unable to travel with the show because entrance into England, which was part of a larger European tour, would only have been possible if he had amnesty for his part in the Canadian uprising. The rumour that Dumont was in England signals a further splitting of the signifier and signified. Dumont explains this misrecognition by blaming Michel Dumas, a member of his community:

> With Buffalo Bill in France were Michel Dumas, Ambroise Lepine — brother of old Maxime Lepine, general in the 1870 rebellion, but no part of the 'rebellion' of 1885. … Michel Dumas and Ambroise Lepine did not stay long with Buffalo Bill. They were almost always drunk and were shown the door. Lepine pretended that he had been mistaken for Buffalo Bill and that it was jealousy that got him fired. They were out on the streets, so they went to knock on the door of the Canadian consul in Paris. That is when Dumas tried to pass for me. M. Pierre Fourrin, a secretary at the Canadian consulate, was asked to present them to the mayor of the Commune of Neuilly where Buffalo Bill's show was set up.
>
> 'General,' said Fourrin, 'I wish to present to you Generals Dumont and Lepine of the Army of the Métis Rebellion in Canada.'
>
> The General took an interest in them as he would show good will to any brother-in-arms. It was because of his intervention with the Canadian consul that Michel Dumas returned to Canada as me, Gabriel Dumont. (*Gabriel* 36-37)

This misrecognition of Dumas for Dumont in these Wild West narratives exposes the slippage between the signifier and signified. The travel of the

symbolic Indian throughout the empire, a process made possible by the refusal of colonialists to distinguish between specific bodies, is a practice that Dumont recuperates. That Gabriel Dumont, the signifier, was able to circulate within the empire through the substitution of Dumas for Dumont, and that Dumont, the narrative persona, responded in his accounts, makes the gap between signifier and signified clear. Dumont locates this popular sign of the "Indian" within his narrative of the Northwest Rebellions to dispute the symbolic. The substitutability of Dumas for Dumont makes it clear that the semiotics of Nativeness signifies difference from the colonial subject rather than Native subjectivity. *Gabriel Dumont Speaks* refuses this symbolic colonialism by asserting a desire for historical accuracy and consequently delegitimizes the historical practice of captivity.

A self-conscious exposition of cultural containment strategies also occurs in Harry Robinson's "Captive in an English Circus." Robinson's text, a told-to story that was recorded and transcribed by ethnographer Wendy Wickwire, is set in 1886, a year after Canada's Northwest Rebellions. This narrative about an Okanagan man, George Jim, who is imprisoned by the RCMP for murdering a non-Native man, further critiques the colonial practices of captivity. Although Jim is sentenced to seven years for his crime, he ends up serving three years in a Canadian prison and then is transported to England against his will where he is displayed as an ethnological exhibit, presumably for the rest of his life. Robinson's story engages with captivity as signifier and as historical event to consider the post-Rebellion period and document the social conditions of Native populations. In its opening lines, the narrative declares that

> This is about George Jim.
> He belongs to Ashnola Band, George Jim.
> Those days, I had it written down — 1886.
> No, I mean 1887.
> That's one year I'm out there.
> That's supposed to be in the 1886
> Instead of 1887.
> That time, 1886,
> The people, Indians from Penticton,
> All the Okanagan Indians,
> They were some from Similkameen,
> And they all move to where Oroville is now
> In the month of August,
> About the last week in the month of August. (Robinson 244)

The narrative quibbles with itself over the accuracy of its dates to highlight the artificiality of linear narratives of the past that circumscribe experience into the fixity of months and years. It marks time through the use of calendar time and also constructs the historical through the recall of social upheaval and migration. The linear progression of time is disrupted through the repetition of months and years as the contrast between preceding and succeeding uses of temporal markers like "August" and "1886" makes paradigmatic associations possible. These strategies invoke the temporal as a contested frame and insist on reading individual history within a political context. As such, it becomes difficult to read Robinson's narrative, which cannot be considered a captivity narrative proper, without noting its relationship to the Northwest Rebellions and the logic of captivity.

In this narrative, the ideology of captivity is articulated most obviously through the incarceration of George Jim, first in a Canadian prison, and then as an ethnological exhibit in England. Jim's capture is initially phrased in the language of colonial law and justice as he is arrested by the police, put on trial, and then sentenced to seven years in Westminster. While this process is justifiable in terms of the legal system, the narrative's description of the procedure lays bare the structure of imprisonment as an unjust containment strategy. Jim's arrest is motivated not by justice for the deceased, but by a bounty prize: "There was a reward, you know, because whoever catch him is going to get paid" (Robinson 252). An image of mercenaries who ambush Jim while he is eating displaces loftier visions of colonial justice and thus reverses the Native/aggressor and settler/victim roles of the captivity genre: it is Jim who is torn from "hearth and home" and "made to suffer indignities" (*Capturing* 114). The police, who had previously been too afraid to arrest Jim on their own because "he's got a revolver on his hip all the time," finally make their appearance and handcuff an already detained prisoner (Robinson 248). The authority of the Canadian government and its paternalistic relationship to the Natives are embedded within a language of dollars and cents. Jim's commodification continues when he is displayed in England in front of an audience who "Pay money to see that Indian. There is not Indian in Europe at that time. Only him" (Robinson 259). Although it is not clear whether Jim is put into a circus or an exposition, it is clear that he is displayed for the paying public.

The consolidation of European and American images of the "Indian" relies on the visual display of the Native body as a signifier of imperial struggle and a captive of scientific discourse. The display of Jim as part of an

ethnological exhibit is comparable to the performance of Natives as part of the Wild West show: both rely on visual images of the "Indian" but differ in terms of the specific ends for which they are mobilized. The Wild West show explicitly set out to entertain its audience by restaging scenes from frontier history, a process that was successful because it used material signifiers to re-enact the historical fantasy and thus give credence to the symbolic. While the Wild West show's success stemmed from its re-enactment of the mythical dimensions of the colonial project, the ethnological exhibit of the nineteenth century relied on the language of science, two complementary strands of a single cultural script. The latter was also used to perform cultural stereotypes, but it relied less on the actions of the performers and more on the spectacle of the body and on the framework used to display it. The practice of exhibiting artifacts was popular in the nineteenth century and, as Raymond Corbey notes, can be put

> into the wider context of the collecting, measuring, classifying, picturing, filing, and narrating of colonial Others during the heyday of colonialism. All these modes of dealing with the exotic, with colonial otherness, functioned in a context of European hegemony, testifying … to the intricate connections that developed between scientific and political practices. (338)

Ethnological displays demonstrated the importance of scientific systems for classifying disparate parts and persons of the world. When actual bodies were part of these exhibitions, they were reduced to object status as their function was to be observed. This mode of display distances the body from its subjectivity and attempts to flatten the Native into sheer spectacle, into the pure signifier of the "Indian." Denied subjectivity, the Native person displayed as "Indian" object performs a separation of signifier and signified, a move that must occur if the representation is to be powerful. As Guy Debord theorizes the spectacle in general, "The spectacle appears at once as society itself, as a part of society and as a means of unification. As a part of society, it is that sector where all attention, all consciousness, converges. Being isolated — and precisely for that reason — this sector is the locus of illusion and false consciousness; the unity it imposes is merely the official language of generalized separation" (12). The image of the "Indian," whether mobilized in the Wild West show, the ethnological exhibit, or the captivity narrative, unifies the colonial imagination because it defines what is radically different from the national or imperial self and thus locatable outside of its cultural parameters.

Given recent theoretical reworkings of "performance" by theorists such as Judith Butler, it is impossible to overlook how the ethnological spectacle performs through patterns of repetition and reiteration. Here, the repetition and reiteration occur through the exchange of bodies. When Jim arrives in England, Charlie, "this man from Enderby, he's a half-breed," sees and converses with Jim (Robinson 259). When Charlie returns home, he tells Jim's aunt and uncle about their nephew's predicament and they try to have the authorities in Westminster return him. The officials claim that Jim is dead and send a coffin with his relatives that is supposed to contain his remains. Yet, when Jim's aunt and uncle open the coffin back in Ashnola, they exclaim, "That's not Jim. That was a Chinaman" (Robinson 265). They then travel from home to Westminster where they are given another coffin and an apology of sorts. Upon their return to Ashnola, Jim's aunt and uncle decide that

> "We got to open 'em, see,
>   to make sure if it was Jim.
> Maybe another Chinaman."
> Anyhow, they open 'em.
> They looked at him
>   And he was a Negro boy.
> A small man too.
>
> Well, they bury him there.
> But there's no use to go back and get George. (Robinson 266)

The narrative's use of repetition and reiteration demonstrates a logic of interchangeability with respect to bodies that is not just limited to the substitution of Natives for "Indians," but of Native, black, and Chinese bodies as examples of alterity. The specific body is subsumed into a general category of Otherness that functions in relation to a colonial Self as the center of an imperial system of representation or the spectacle that unifies the social consciousness and colonizes representation in a fashion similar to the captivity narrative.

Robinson's story disrupts the colonial logic by reversing this costruction of the Native body as object and the colonial viewer as subject. His narrative puts imperialism on display to interrogate colonialism and capitalism as logics used to construct a nation through the containment of alterity. Furthermore, "Captive in an English Circus" upsets the nationalist teleology that posits progress as the goal of state funding for the CPR. Instead of lauding the railway as a sign of governmental "might" and "foresight" that looks towards the future, the text tells of its negative effects:

There must have been a little court in Vernon those days.
But Kamloops.
Then they had him there for a while
  and then they got a sentence seven years.
Only seven years.
Take him to Westminster.
And the railroad drives into Westminster in 1886.
And they already had a railroad right in Vancouver.

And Mr. Jim,
  they sent him from Kamloops on the railroad to Westminster.
And then they had him in that penitentiary.
And he was in there three years.
Supposed to be seven years and then he'll come out.
That's his sentence. (Robinson 255)

The CPR becomes the vehicle that transports Jim into a cramped jail cell and then towards a life of indentured labour. Robinson disinvests the CPR of its symbolic role in a nation imagined as peaceful, just, and industrious to resignify the Western railroad as the tool of state violence.

This travel between epistemological frameworks is a movement that is not always successful or even welcome as translation presupposes the commensurability of systems. For instance, Robinson recounts a problem that Charlie runs into when he tries to make Jim's aunt and uncle understand the administrative mechanisms of the department of Indian Affairs:

And he said,
  "If you want me, I can be with you,"
  because he can speak in English, you know.
But these Indians, they couldn't understand.
They don't know.
In another way, they don't like it.
They say,
  "They should not pay for our fare
  because that's a lot of money."
They figure they could pay for their own fare
  But it takes a lot of money.
And they could never understand about the contact
  So they could get paid their fare from the Indian affairs.
Charlie told them,
  But they couldn't understand. (Robinson 262-63)

Jim's aunt's and uncle's difficulties with the system conflate their incomprehension of English with a dislike for contact with Indian Affairs and signals the ways in which it is impossible to separate the two. As such, their refusal of Charlie's offer to serve as interpreter can be read as a refusal to allow mediation between these cultural systems as if to claim an incommensurability between social systems. The exchange between Charlie and Jim's relatives phrases the translation between languages and the contact with Indian Affairs in the language of economic exchange and, like the interactions between the Canadian government, its bounty hunters, and the Natives, is expressed in terms of money. Cultural value is sustained in this instance through the refusal to allow exchange between particular parties and thus creates a limited market.

In contrast, Robinson's telling the story to Wickwire in English implies consent to a process of cultural translation that operates in at least two ways: a linguistic translation from Okanagan, presumably the language in which the stories were passed down to Robinson from other storytellers, to English, as well as a translation from oral to written language. This process of translation involves a shift between narrative and linguistic modes, and also transforms the text's relationship to its cultural framework, a movement that is typical of most works that cross cultural boundaries. In this particular case, Robinson's story turns into what Thomas King calls "interfusional" writing, a style in which "the patterns, metaphors, structures as well as the themes and characters come primarily from oral literature" (13). King argues that "More than this, Robinson, within the confines of written language, is successful in creating an oral voice" that works against the fixity of written text by encouraging readers to read aloud, thus "re-creating at once the storyteller and the performance" (13). Each performance of the story functions as a site of interaction between storyteller and audience and changes the text each time, endowing it with a sense of fluidity. Robinson's text defies the generic expectations of non-Native readers as it draws on the authority of speech to transform the reader into storyteller, even as it is clear that the story is being read instead of recited from memory. The reader becomes at once an immediate audience for the storyteller and a reader of text, a combination that uses the verbal, a practice the local and the everyday, to displace institutionalized history. This process is supplemented by the weight of the historical that Robinson's story, as part of an oral tradition, carries.

The implications of this destabilizing of genres in general and captivity narratives in particular are significant as it disturbs the larger project of containing and classifying writings about history. The redeployment of the

captivity narrative signals its status as an ideological apparatus that is "not only the *stake*, but also the *site* of class struggle" (Althusser 140). The struggle over the genre of the captivity narrative becomes a means to transform the ideological, "the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live," by disinvesting signs of their symbolic roles and reinvesting them within alternate cultural systems (Althusser 155). The CPR signifies the symbiosis of Canadian law and business; but "Canada" too is in flux in the nineteenth century. The authority of the Canadian government is caught between its subordination to England, and its own subordination of its Native and Métis populations, which troubles any discourse of national authority. If the CPR is the symbol of modernization and Canadian nationhood, it is in part because it functions as a condition of possibility for the massacres at Frog and Duck Lakes. The captivity narratives written in the wake of these events transform the traditional roles of captor and captive at the precise historical moment that colonial expansion once and for all seems triumphant. The semiotics of the nation, signified through the CPR, depends on a semiotics of the "Indian" that can only become meaningful once it is observed outside the nation, because England is site of symbolic power for the colonized nation. The process of interpellating subjectivity within the Canadian context is intersected by this process of interpellating nationhood. "Captive in an English Circus" and *Gabriel Dumont Speaks* critically distance the reader from the containment strategies of the captivity genre and reveal its complicity with the imperial expansionist project.

Author's Note

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Notes

[1] According to Barnholden, the first dictation was given by Dumont to "a group of journalists and politicians" and was used to "advance the fortunes of the Quebec Liberal Party" (13). It was eventually translated by George F.G. Stanley in 1949 and published in *Canadian Historical Review* as "Gabriel Dumont's Account of the North West Rebellion, 1885."

[2] Oral stories told by Native storytellers differ from most non-Native stories in a

number of respects, but especially in terms of the author function. In her introduction to Robinson's book, Wickwire notes that "All stories are considered true stories. In fact, Harry, in the tradition of Okanagan storytelling, would never dream of making up a story. Stories describe either situations experienced personally or they describe situations passed on by others who similarly experienced them, however long ago" (16).

[3] See, for instance, Christopher Castiglia's *Bound and Determined* (1996). Castiglia's exploration of the captivity paradigm within the American context begins with Mary Rowlandson's narrative in the seventeenth century, and ends with the abduction of Patty Hearst in the twentieth century. He argues that the genre continues to be relevant because it maps out relations between "the plight of the literal captive and less tangible forms of victimization and restriction experienced by their white, female readers" (4). June Namias's *White Captives* (1993) also examines various accounts of captivity by Natives in America from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Namias claims that such a study is pertinent "because of what it tells us about Anglo-Americans in contact with others and with their own notions of gender, sexuality, and society" (17). Pauline Turner Strong discusses how American captivity narratives between 1576 and 1776 complicate the relationship between "colonial practice and representation" (3). While discussions of captivity narratives typically focus primarily on encounters in which Natives were the aggressors, Strong also includes texts in which Natives were the captives.

[4] Misao Dean characterizes nineteenth-century Canada as a society that "self-consciously accommodat[ed] and inscrib[ed] the deviation from European norms which the idea of Canada represented" (11). While it upheld the morality associated with the imperial project, Canadian society differed from England in the class mobility it permitted as a settler colony. Canada also necessarily differed from England in its construction of femininity as the "supposed passivity and physical limitations of the nineteenth-century woman were contradicted by the necessity for active and physical labour on the Canadian bush farm" (Dean 12). Like the gap between the colonial ideology posited by captivity narratives and their historical realities, the gender ideal for women often did not correspond with the material conditions of their everyday lives.

[5] In an article in The *New York Times*, for instance, readers learned that "The funeral of Mrs. Gowanlock and other victims of the massacre at Fort Pitt took place to-day, the bodies being buried at Battleford in presence of Gen. Middleton's force" ("Northwest Troubles").

[6] Collections of captivity narratives such as *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, edited by Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, and *The Indians and Their Captives*, edited by Levernier and Cohen, typically focus on tales of white captivity by Native captors. While such collections are useful for probing discourses of femininity and whiteness, the absence of narratives of captivity by white captors makes it difficult to engage with colonial practices of captivity. One collection that reverses this paradigm to some extent is *American Captivity Narratives*, edited by Gordon M. Sayre, which reads the experiences of the African slave alongside Mary Rowlandson's capture by Natives and an excerpt of Geronimo's autobiography.

[7] Douglas Sprague notes in his history of the events leading up to the 1885 Rebellion that the government's response to the Métis demands and subsequent acts of rebellion solved two problems at once. The government responded to the rebellion and proved to the Liberal opposition that there existed a true need for further funding for the CPR. Macdonald did so by using

> the CPR as the vehicle for transporting the unfortunate Canadian volunteers, the first contingent of whom left Toronto on March 30 in two separate trains. When the men reached the north shore of Lake Superior in the first week of April, they discovered that there were four gaps in the line that had to be crossed by sleigh or on

foot. The worst part, however, was one section of isolated railway where the men had to ride on flat cars in the open, bitter cold. Still, in less than two weeks, more than 3,000 troops did reach the Territories ready to be deployed against the 'half breeds' and their few Indian allies. (175-76)

[8] In his biography of Gabriel Dumont, George Woodcock claims that the appeal of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show was twofold: "To perform before the American people might not only be a means of escaping the exile's everlasting circle of poverty; it might even be a means of bringing home to the world beyond Canada the grievances of his people — his nation — whose plight he knew had grown even worse since the defeat of the rebellion" (233-34). Furthermore, Daniel Francis notes that often these performers "were proud of their traditions and happy to get a chance to ride and shoot again, if only for a couple of hours a day in crowded arena using blanks. Some were coerced by government officials who wanted to rid the reserves of 'troublemakers,' however temporarily. The money attracted others. Sitting Bull, for example received $50 a week from Cody, plus a $125 signing bonus, not a huge sum but a lot when compared to the limited opportunities on the reserves" (95).

[9] It is clear, though, that there existed a double-voiced discourse around this practice of putting Natives on public display. In Canada, there was tension between those who ran exhibitions and the Department of Indian Affairs. The former viewed the displays as an opportunity to entertain as they taught the audience about Native culture while the latter was opposed to spectacles that worked against the government's goal of assimilation. Although this disagreement existed in the nineteenth century, "By 1908, however, what had until then been a minor irritation was becoming an urgent problem and resulted in the beginning of an intense and sometimes acrimonious exchange of opinions" (Regular 2). The Calgary exhibition, for example, became a site of contention over how to regulate the Native population.

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