

“THE UNREDEEMED CAPTIVE”

The book entitled ‘The Unredeemed Captive’ written by John Demos tells a family story from early America history. It is about the family of Reverend John Williams with focus on one of his children, Eunice Williams.

On year 1704, French and Indian troops attacked the town of Deerfield, Massachusetts which was then were already occupied by puritan settlers of New England. The attack there means there were killing of residents, burning of their homes and taking with them captives. Reverend Williams whole family were among the captives. His wife and two children were killed, sparing him and his five other children. After several years, they were released except for Eunice. Hence, the story of John Demos’ “The Unredeemed Captive”.

From the way John Demo wrote the story, one could surmise that his purpose is more of informing the readers rather than entertaining them. It is more of a history book rather than a novel; a result of a conducted research with citations from documents read. Proof of which are the quoted lines Demo incorporated in the story. For example: *As Cotton Mather intimated to Rev. Williams in correspondence, “You are carried into the land of the Canadiens for your good.”* He wrote down facts gathered from different sources. What came about is a story from different viewpoints. Not just from the English Settlers, the French or the Native Indians. It was as if John Demos is vent on clarifying issues among the three. In the book, John Demos tries to make clear the relationships among the puritan settlers of New England, the Roman-Catholic French of New France (Canada) and the Native Americans (Indians). He expound on elements or factors that made their relationships conflicting and difficult; the presence of racism and superiority. He paints through this historical story an incisive picture of three cultures living

close together, Puritan New England, French Canada and Native-Americans. His research on the matter mentioned has been very thorough.

John Demos used a narrative style of a novel showing all points of view that resulted to an honest portrayal of incidents and issues. He develops clarity of ideas through the absence of prejudice or bias. His narration of the story unlike the previous narratives written by the captives themselves is quite objective and honest. He sees to it that the readers are informed on the totality of the event "The Deerfield Attack" by making known the reason for the attack. He is able to describe the different ideals, philosophies and policies of the French and the English towards the Indians and vice versa. For the English it is their intent to convert the Indians faith; for the Indians to learn the English philosophies by embracing Christianity. This is the ground where conflicts stemmed from. Indians resist causing the very foundation for the attack.

Another point for John Demos is when he points out that even in captivity, the victims even in their state still have options: They can either be ransomed and returned to their community or be one with the captors and assumed their ways of life. After several years of captivity, John Williams along with his four children had been ransomed and were able to return to the English Colony in Deerfield. However his daughter Eunice Williams opted to remain with the Mohawks. Furthermore, Demos gives details, covering not only the sufferings of the captives but also the rewards of the experience to them. The strength of humanity not just its brutality is illustrated effectively by the author when he states that *Rev. Williams, saw captivity as a spiritual journey, a punishment for sins and the destiny assigned them by God. It was their duty to endure, and by doing so they pleased Him.*

In some ways, John Demos is able to attain his goal in writing this story. He succeeded in making this particular part of American History more remarkable and significant . . . and in

some ways fascinating. The historical event becomes dramatic and interesting. By his portrayal of Eunice, the Puritan English girl who was helplessly taken away from her inherited culture and was thrust into another world. Readers surely find it fascinating to uncover the pieces of events that made Eunice adapt to the new culture. It becomes dramatic when the time came for Eunice to become finally free to choose to go back to her English family but she refuses. The feelings of rejection and the puzzlement on the part of John Williams and the concerns and fears on the part of Eunice's adopted family (or the Indian family who adopted Eunice). In addition to that, Eunice even marries a Native American, which is during that time a very big deal. This is the part where John Demos made light of the history. An inclusion to liven up a very informative and well researched historical book. As for the rest of the book, he succeeded in making it comprehensive and objective. All the sides (English settlers, French and Native Indians) are presented in a way that not a single one among them is treated as the monster of the story.

However, in some ways the realization of his goal in writing "Unredeemed Captive" were seemingly failures. Details can sometimes overwhelm readers. So instead of clarification the historical details might cause confusion to the readers. He failed to make the transition between purely fact based history and historical fiction, as stated in the introduction of the story. A reader may not be blamed if he would think of this book as a result of an extensive research paper. This book probably is not intended for the general public. The use of words, phrases and sentences from previous writings in a language unlike the present makes it difficult for readers of younger generation. In other words, the book's connection with the readers is not that strong.

John Demos' book may be a little difficult to read but generally speaking the book is still interesting from a scholarly and academic point of view. The book contains more than enough information that will leave no questions or doubts as to what really took place during the

specified time in the Early American History. The basis of modern American culture can be gleaned from his book. The very diversity of American culture has in its essence given by John Demos.

Personally speaking, this book effectively made me knowledgeable on the period of Early American History. I was able to understand more the reasons for the conflict that arose at that time. I need not memorize details for with John Demos' "Unredeemed Captive" they all come naturally. History becomes a story, not just fragmented ideas but details woven into to form one cohesive story.

I learned about the clash of beliefs that became the focal point of the conflicts during the period. Not because of greed for material things and for the power to dominate and physically conquer did the attack take place. I learned this part of history on a different viewpoint: that of humanity.

I can always this book as a reference in my study of culture, in every attempt to understand the very essence of being an American – the integration of greatly diversified beliefs and ideals, in motivating myself to see history not as a subject but as something that explains life itself.

This kind of story enables me to enjoy learning. As for my ideals, John Demos' clarification of philosophies and beliefs sort of leads me to do some introspection on my own. It is a better way of understanding also what is in me.

For those who are interested in history, this book is perfect. They will surely love it for there would be no need to look for supplementary reading materials. I also recommend this for students to read. This book will add more knowledge and comprehension as regards American culture and history.

