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The unredeemed captive book review

Unredeemed captive.

The Unredeemed Captive by John Demos Published: January 1st, 1994 Well-written and thoroughly researched, this book leans toward scholarly historical writing, which slows the narrative. As someone who isn't into American history, I found myself dozing off occasionally; however, this isn't a criticism of Demos or the story. This is a well-crafted book about an overlooked piece of American history, suitable for those who enjoy American history and can handle scholarly writing. The author's ending is particularly noteworthy – it's a masterclass in historical nonfiction writing. In 1704, a Native American war party attacked a Massachusetts village, abducting a Puritan minister and his children. The minister was released, but the daughter chose to stay with her captors. Her extraordinary story delves into race, religion, and cultural conflict between two groups. During the 18th century, the threat of abduction and kidnapping was ever-present in towns surrounding forests. Men could emerge from these woods at any moment, taking away people and their families. This was a harsh reality that people had to live with for decades. The story of John Williams, a minister in Deerfield, Massachusetts, who was taken captive along with his family, is a testament to this era. His 7-year-old daughter was adopted by an Indian tribe and refused to return home, much like many other New England children. I recommend this book to anyone seeking a break from fiction. This historical account has captured my interest, and I believe it will do the same for readers. One of the takeaways from "The Unredeemed Captive" is that my fascination lies in the phenomenon of Indian captivity rather than the captivity narratives themselves. These stories are written by Puritans who have rejected the alien culture they were exposed to and are invested in demonizing Indians and extolling the virtues of Puritan culture. I find this project unsympathetic as it reinscribes cultural boundaries and hierarchical judgments. The book is also an experiment in narrative history, born out of John Demos' desire to tell a story. He reconstructs the story of Eunice Williams, who was captured by the Kahnawake Indians at age seven and chose to remain with them despite efforts from her family, birth culture, and government to "redeem" her. The title is a play on the account of John Williams' own captivity. The historian Demos faces constraints in reconstructing the other side, as only one document attributed to Eunice remains - a letter to her... Eunice Williams' story is deeply intertwined with the complexities of her adopted culture and identity. As a woman who could neither read, write, nor speak English as an adult, she became an intensely mediated figure in the narrative. Her experiences reveal more about the societal expectations placed on women and captives than they do about Eunice herself. Demos' work raises several questions that warrant further exploration. He touches upon the historical record, but delves deeper into the cultural context surrounding Puritan and Kahnawake traditions. However, he neglects to address the nuances of female captives and their relationships with their male kinfolk in depth. Moreover, his handling of the concept of "captivity" is problematic, as it fails to acknowledge Eunice's agency and refusal to leave her adopted home. The fact that Demos' relatives continue to frame Eunice's experience as "captivity" highlights the need for careful examination of this term. The cultural context of Kahnawake, a hybridized Iroquois-French settlement near Montréal, provides valuable insight into the complexities of identity and belonging. The use of multiple names, such as Marguerite, Gannestehawi, and Arosen, further underscores the fluidity of identity in Eunice's story. Ultimately, Demos' work benefits from a more balanced approach that unpacks the terms and assumptions underlying his narrative. By now I'm familiar with several old history books that struggled to captivate me. This one stands out for its fascinating events, but like those earlier attempts, it's let down by too many facts and not enough description. That said, someone trained to enjoy this sort of thing might really appreciate this book. In the dead of winter, a group of prisoners embarked on a 500km trek that would test their resolve. John Demos sets the stage for this epic journey by placing the story of white captives in context. The taking of John Williams and his family during a raid on Deerfield, Massachusetts by Indian allies of the French marks the beginning of this tale. Eunice Williams, his daughter, was adopted by an Indian family after being "captured" and later married into the tribe, fully embracing their way of life and converting to Catholicism. She chose not to be "redeemed." Demos uses Eunice's story as a springboard to explore the lives of both the Native Americans and the New Englanders. The Unredeemed Captive by John Demos is a masterfully woven narrative that delves into the complexities of colonial Massachusetts through the lens of two families: the Williams and the Mohawks. By skillfully incorporating letters, journals, public notices, and legal records, Demos crafts a story that comes alive with the same fluidity as decent fiction. He goes beyond mere analysis, instead interpreting the larger picture of colonial life to give a more intimate portrayal of key figures like John and Samuel Williams, while also situating them within their time and place. Demos' work is a testament to his ability to balance detailed research with engaging storytelling, making it both captivating for readers interested in early America and invaluable for those studying New England or Kahnawake. His reliance on original sources adds depth and authenticity to the narrative, often bringing his own interpretations and extrapolations that sometimes feel repetitive but are undoubtedly enriching. One of the most compelling aspects of The Unredeemed Captive is its portrayal of the unredeemed captive, Eunice Williams, who chose to adopt Mohawk ways after being adopted by a Catholic family. Demos' recounting of her life in Canada, including her baptism as Marguerite and marriage to a Mohawk man, provides a nuanced look at cross-cultural interactions during this period. Through John Williams' quest to redeem his daughter, Eunice, and the reactions of both European and indigenous communities, Demos paints a vivid picture of colonial America—a world where cultural divides were bridged by violence but also fostered understanding. His work is a significant contribution to historical studies, offering a window into life on the periphery of early American society. In conclusion, The Unredeemed Captive is not just an engaging story about redemption and cultural exchange; it's a detailed historical study that delves into the complexities of colonial America through the lives of those who lived at its fringes. The author delves into the history of the 1704 Deerfield raid, exploring its various aspects, including the involvement of English, French, and Native American parties, as well as the long-term consequences. However, this extensive coverage often leads to dense reading. The book provides valuable insights into how historians piece together evidence and draw conclusions. The narrative focuses on Eunice Williams and her family, whose story is intertwined with the raid. In February 1704, French-allied Native Americans raided Deerfield, Massachusetts, kidnapping Eunice and several family members. The Native Americans had ordered Reverend John Williams' capture due to his value as a prisoner in exchange for New France and New England. Although efforts were made to redeem the Williams family, Eunice was adopted by the Kahnawake Mohawk people. Historian John Demos examines Eunice's life as a Kahnawake, using first-hand accounts and evidence from village descriptions to form theories about her experiences. However, he acknowledges the limitations of this evidence due to biases in European sources. Throughout the book, Demos demonstrates how historians weigh evidence, often giving more significance to primary documents. Despite its thorough research, the author finds fault with Demos' incomplete examination of Albany's history. This oversight is particularly notable given the city's significant role in trying to redeem Eunice. The error highlights a missed opportunity for further investigation into the local context. The Unredeemed Captive deals with a real-life case, revolving around John Williams, his family, and their capture during an attack on their Massachusetts town in the early 18th Century. However, it's John's daughter Eunice who remains captive willingly, marrying and integrating into the Native American tribe to the dismay of her remaining family. The book offers fascinating insights into how Native Americans were used in cross-border warfare by both French Canada and English colonies, as well as significant conversions to Catholicism, including that of Eunice. It's a poignant account of life before the mass extermination and destruction of Native Americans and their ways of life. While it provides an immersive look at 18th Century colonial America, the sparsity of facts regarding Eunice's experiences leaves much unanswered, making it both this book's strength and weakness. Of forgotten lands, we have only two words that give us a glimpse into the life of Eunice Williams, the Unredeemed Captive. The words are "Jaghte oghte," which are the only recorded instances of her speaking aside from a letter written later in her life. This book is a journey through everyday life, revealing the struggles and triumphs of regular people in 18th-century New England, French-Indian territory disputes, and the lives of Native Americans. The story of Eunice Williams, taken by Native and French raiders, brought to Montreal, and eventually becoming Catholic and marrying a Native man, is one of courage and resilience. Despite her family's horror, she chose to stay in Montreal, a decision that would have profound consequences for those living through the colonial wars. The author did an excellent job of researching and telling Eunice's story, providing context about the period and offering insights into early American colonial wars. However, the pace of the book slowed down towards the middle, making it a more challenging read. The story begins with the initial raid, the long trek to Montreal, and the devastating loss of her mother. The rest of the book details her family's efforts to repatriate her. Overall, this is an interesting story that sheds light on the lives of people living through the colonial wars. Despite being a more academic text, it is still engaging and thought-provoking, making it worth reading for those interested in history. This book provides an in-depth look at the Williams family's struggles with Native American culture and their experiences during the 1700s. It covers various topics including historical conflicts, different Native American tribes, religions like Puritanism and Catholicism, and the family's attempts to reunite with their sister Eunice who had adopted a Kahnawake life. The author delves into religious themes, European views on Native Americans, and the societal pressures that led to the Deerfield raid and subsequent events. While it may be dense and not for casual readers, this meticulously researched book sheds light on complex historical topics and provides valuable insights into the lives of those involved. I also appreciated the title's wordplay, 'unredeemed', referencing un-ransomed, unrepentant, and unsaved individuals in terms of their religious choices. Eunice Williams, a prominent Puritan's daughter, was taken captive by French and Indians during the Deerfield Raid in 1704, at around seven years old. Her family was ransomed, but she chose to stay with her Mohawk captors. The author's attempt to recreate Eunice's voice is notable, despite her inability to communicate due to forgotten English skills. This lack of personal testimony serves as a reminder that the narrative relies heavily on external sources and interpretations, which can be a drawback in terms of providing an unbiased historical account. Given article text here Here's this fascinating book about "Eunice", a seven-year-old girl who was abducted by Native Americans in 1700s and became part of their community. The story follows her family's efforts to redeem her ten years later but she had already assimilated, forgotten English, converted to Catholicism, and married an Indian man. She didn't want to return and the book explores the complex views of colonists towards Indians through letters and documents. It also delves into the uncertain alliances between Native American communities and European powers like France and England. The author presents a well-researched narrative that's both informative and engaging, making it a great read for history enthusiasts. A remarkable tale unfolds around a minister who found himself in a precarious situation. Although he was eventually freed, his young daughter surprisingly decided to remain with her captors. This gripping narrative explores themes of identity, faith, and the complex interplay between two distinct cultures, ultimately shedding light on a powerful story of resilience and adaptability.