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Susan Wiseman

Complaint in the wilderness: Mary Rowlandson speaks with Job

On the tenth of February 1675. Came the Indians with great numbers upon Lancaster: Their first coming was about Sun-rising; hearing the noise of some Guns, we looked out; several Houses were burning, and the Smoke ascending to Heaven. There were five persons taken in one house, the Father, and the Mother and a sucking Child, they knockt on the head; the other two they took and carried away alive. There were three others, who being out of their Garison upon some occasion were set upon; one was knockt on the head, the other escaped: Thus these murtherous wretches went on, burning, and destroying before them

So Mary Rowlandson opens her narrative. Published seven years later in Cambridge Massachusetts, *The sovereignty and goodness of God* (1682) is both the story of Rowlandson's kindnap by Indians and, as the title implies, a drama of God's power and providence.¹ Eagerly received by her contemporaries, Rowlandson's text uses her experiences during King Phillip's War to address her own and her polity's religious and political experiences. This essay puts Rowlandson's text and tale in relation to complaint to ask how it is illuminated by contemporary practices and genres.

In scholarship *The sovereignty and goodness of God* is habitually interpreted as an example of the retrospectively designated (and at times teleologically understood), genre of captivity narrative.² While this is a productive approach, the text evidently has additional generic affiliations. Accordingly, this essay analyses Rowlandson's text from the vantage point of complaint, a mode

recognised by contemporaries as expressing political exclusion and religious suffering. Putting the text in relation to a mode contemporaries considered part of a writing repertoire, as complaint was, allows us to consider experience (kidnap, captivity) and other powerful aspects of Rowlandson's text including its claims to be considered as a narrative of experiential Protestant faith; as a journey narrative and, above all, as a political lament protesting against her own and her polity's circumstances. At the same time, by examining Rowlandson's case, the essay aims to contribute to thinking on the ways in which the complaint mode was used within religio-political thinking more widely.

This essay analyses complaint as an intertextual Biblical mode, rather than the more familiar erotic and eroto-political lament. In focussing on complain not Jeremiad as a use of the Bible, it joins John Kerrigan's work on the mode of Biblical complaint and that of Felch, Ross and White in this volume.³ The features of complaint – lament, accusation, anger, experience - suggest that discussion of it can be readily integrated into thinking on vernacular protestant experiential narrative. As significantly, Rowlandson's case raises questions about methods of locating native, as well settler, response to King Philip's War. When Rowlandson's use of complaint calls on the sense of voice, the subject position of one excluded from the polity, and power of the lamenting voice it does so in the context of other, native, laments.⁴ At the same time, for some of the textual fragments we have, the War makes complaint a mode marking both experiential divisions and some overlaps.

Both colonists and native people recognised land and conversion as points of tension and these impacted on Rowlandson's home in the isolated, vulnerable, settlement. Lancaster, Worcester County, Massachusetts.⁵ Incorporated in 1653, Lancaster had grown since then and Mary White's family were numbered amongst newcomers whose wealth came from land rather than the fur trade. As Neil Salisbury and others note, while the incomers' focus on land that brought stability to Lancaster had a negative impact on native people in the nearby

praying town of Nashaway as the hunting to extinction of mammals valued for fur left them deprived of both income and land.⁶ Nashaway was one of the towns resulting from John Eliot's longstanding Christianising campaign which had sought to draw Indians into 'praying towns' and by the 1670s fourteen towns existed. Native people were evaluated by settler standards that shifted amongst religious, cultural and self-interested.⁷ These towns disrupted Indian social structures; sowed conflict between converted and unconverted Indians; made the praying Indians subject to settler law and failed to recognise Indians' own ethical, social and political culture.⁸ Crucially, Eliot's mission understood tribal people as having potential to convert and faith as potentially shared between convert and settler. It is an indication of the tensions between settler and praying Indian that James Quannapaguiat, a praying Indian, did warn that Lancaster was to be attacked but he was not trusted enough to be believed.

The war with Metacom, or King Philip, emerged from the uncertain and shifting religious and socio-political identifications of this situation and caused deaths estimated at 5,000 native subjects, 2,000 settlers.⁹ It was precipitated by events surrounding the death of a 'praying Indian', James Quannapohit or Sassamon, whose life, marked by his in-between status and back-and-forth identifications, met a violent end at the hands of Metacom's advisers who were, themselves, put to death by the state. As Richard Cogley reminds us, notwithstanding the positive conclusion of Eliot's *Indian Dialogues*, in practice Metacom himself marked a boundary to John Eliot's mission to the Indians. Metacom seems to have used Sassamon to learn to read rather than to learn to read the Bible and also rejected Eliot himself and religious ambassadors.¹⁰

The war came to Lancaster and swept up Mary Rowlandson in its carnage and conflagration. As Rowlandson discloses, she had 'often before this said, that if the Indians should come, I should chuse rather to be killed by them then taken alive'. However, 'when it came to the tryal my mind changed; their glittering weapons so daunted my spirit, that I chose rather to go along with

those (as I may say) ravenous Beasts, then that moment to end my dayes'. What happened next was captivity as she awaited ransom, death or change – and a prolonged, arduous and complex journey with the Indians as through twenty stages or as she terms them 'Removes' that 'we had up and down the Wilderness'. As we will see, her writing suggests that she is aware that in this strange time she changed, or became known to herself, in morally, spiritually and physically new ways. But at the same time the text echoes with lament, rage, hatred and desperation.

Voicing complaint: Job and Moses

As her house burns Mary Rowlandson is prompted to say with Job 1.15, '*And only I am escaped alone to tell the news*'.¹¹ The opening of the narrative sees Rowlandson's homestead ablaze and 'of the thirty seven persons who were in this one House' all are captive or killed. Thus, from the start of the narrative captivity is understood not so much as we understand it as a genre, but as a prompt to complaint and to voice. That Rowlandson takes on the voice of Job to speak her complaint should remind us of her position of familiarity not only with the Bible but with the power of speaking grounded in her role as a minister's wife since about 1656 and, perhaps, her own mother's church involvement.¹² The notebooks of her mother's pastor, John Fiske, in Wenham, with their vocabulary of testimony, admonition, witness, humiliation, psalm-singing, reading of narratives of faith, speech and silence illuminate the emphasis on conversion and the governmental, legal-Calvinist ethos of the New England congregations.¹³ Thus, in the early removes the plaining voice of God's subject is the keynote. Job's lonely voice is intercut with Psalm 27.13 which juxtaposes faith and, close by, mourning and the experience of punishment.¹⁴

These plaintive voiced elements of the Old Testament, Job and the Psalms, weave through the whole narrative.

Rowlandson obviously has a Bible to hand as she composes her narrative, but not during the first two forced ‘removes’ from Lancaster when she gives specific texts from Job and elsewhere. Therefore (leaving aside the unknowable issue of whether she tells the truth about what she thought), as far as the reader is concerned Job and the other passages express her state of mind at that time. We know Rowlandson had no Bible initially because during the third Remove the narrative supplies her with one. As she tells it, a returning plunderer asks ‘if I wou’d have a Bible, he had got one in his basket’. Asked ‘whether he thought the *Indians* would let me read? He answered, yes: so I took the Bible.’ The presence of the Bible to think with as she is taken deep into the wilderness is intradiegetically justified, but while its literal presence may be providential it is animated for Rowlandson in ways that allow her to describe and judge her experience of the hybrid space of wilderness.

Rowlandson describes pouncing on the Biblical text she needs to fully articulate the meaning of her plight. She is perhaps suggesting that she is guided to it:

in that melancholy time, it came into my mind to read first the 28.*Chap.* of *Deut.* Which I did, and when I had read it, my dark heart wrought in this manner. *That there was no mercy for me, and that the blessings were gone, and the Curses Came in their room, and that I had lost my opportunity.* But the Lord helped me still to go on reading till I came to *Chap.*30 the seven first verses, where I found, *There was mercy promised again, if we would return to him by repentance; and though we were scattered from one end of the Earth to the other, yet the Lord would gather us together, and turn all those curses upon our Enemies.* I do not desire to live to forget this Scripture, and what a comfort it was to me.¹⁵

The book's epigraph is also from Deuteronomy (32, 29) and emphasises the two sides of God's power with his promise that 'I kill and I make alive'. So, whether or not Rowlandson had control of the paratextual material, for the reader the quotations combine to emphasise the threats and promises of Deuteronomy, steering them to to consider the covenant.

Part of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament and, from the New England perspective, the books associated with Moses and the law), Deuteronomy describes both the promises of the covenant and the curses upon those who transgress and are punished in the interests of their ultimate redemption. Chapters 28 to 30.10 discusses the covenant made by Moses in the land of Moab. In chapter 28 Moses enumerates the curses that will fall upon those under God's covenant who break their promise to him, with chapter 30 renewing the covenant's promise.¹⁶ In New England Deuteronomy's significance was reinforced by the importance of John Calvin.¹⁷ Calvin produced a huge volume of sermons on Deuteronomy as well as a 'harmony' of the four last books of the Pentateuch which remained in Latin and French.¹⁸ His printed sermons addressed both the covenant itself and the subject's place in it. As Arthur Golding translated Calvin, once God has 'convicted' men and 'eaten downe their pride' he will renew his 'promise' that 'by his only power' so 'we be made newe creatures'.¹⁹ Given Calvin's specific focus on the books of covenant, and emerging scholarly understanding that Calvin as well as Calvinists were important in the New England dissemination of 'reformed thought', Rowlandson's engagement with Deuteronomy can be seen as part of that reception.²⁰ It is significant that Rowlandson here selects God's curses against those who abandon the covenant and the reward to those who ultimately submit (chapters 28-30) to shape her overall narrative because it pushes the reader think about her story as having collective and political dimensions in relation to God's people in Massachusetts. Deuteronomy offers a legal, literary,

collective strand of citation interwoven with her use of Job to voice her isolated struggle.

Rowlandson tells us that she thought of Job and Deuteronomy in a wilderness where she was often bereft of even basic orientation. '[T]o better declare what happened to me' she will shape the text in 'Removes', a term which structures the central part of her narrative of her captive march through Massachusetts. It registers simultaneously that she moves her resting place and that in being kidnaped she was, in Susan Howe's words 'abducted from the structure of experience', plunged into 'amorphous psychic space'.²¹ The text traces interactions amongst landscape, event and Bible to mediate self and authority; it shapes her time in the wilderness in the mode of religious complaint.

Printed as section headings the removes track each time her captors 'remove', or, perhaps, each time she is 'removed' by them. 'Remove' (for Rowlandson both noun and verb) has considerably narrowed in range since the seventeenth century when it suggested leaving, moving, also, more specifically to be displaced, transferred from a position or role or house; 'to keep apart or separate'; detach. At the same time, it meant to kill or die and, in one of its more specific meanings, to move a trial from one court to another. It also pertained to the subject – a person might be removed from their opinion; moved emotionally and change 'in form or character', indeed – 'transform'.²² While for us, Rowlandson's march makes a strange parallel with the forcible internment of native people on Deer Island, in her terms, she is dragged 'up and down the Wilderness' (p. 14); the Indians' paths are to her wastes.

Ultimately, Rowlandson turns out to have travelled in a large circle, but for much of the journey she was lost, with her destination unknown. She writes in an early remove that she must 'travel with them into the vast and desolate wilderness, I knew not wither'. These 'Barbarous Creatures' travel sometimes, 'three days together, without resting', in snow, and with the 'English' close behind.²³ Rowlandson describes a journey which often deteriorates into a

desperate attempt to stay alive, eat and keep their enemies outwitted.

Documenting physical movement while adrift and experiencing herself in new and frightening ways, Rowlandson dramatizes effort, endurance and event in terms of sin, providence, and redemption. Biblical wilderness, like Job's voice, echoes her ordeal in a Biblical landscape iconography.²⁴

At the fifth remove a key event in the flight of Rowlandson's captors shows her interpretative strategies. The Indians must cross the Bacquang river in freezing conditions to reach terrain much safer for them but even more disorienting for Rowlandson. As Rowlandson later confirms, they are in flight from the English army and send back 'their stoutest men,' to hold troops 'in play whilst the rest escaped'.²⁵ Rowlandson describes their flight:

with their old, and with their young: some carried their old decrepit mothers, some carried one, and some another. Four of them carried a great Indian upon a Bier; but going through a thick Wood with him, they were hindred, and could make no hast; whereupon they took him upon their backs, and carried him, one at a time, till they came to Bacquaug River. Upon a Friday, a little after noon we came to this River. When all the company was come up, and were gathered together, I thought to count the number of them, but they were so many, and being somewhat in motion, it was beyond my skil.²⁶

Even as Rowlandson describes an experience so confusing it defeats even basic counting, the text marked by fascination by the sheer number of Indians, all moving, working and acting according to plans. Like Crusoe after her, Rowlandson hopes to make sense of a wilderness in numbers and measurement, but unlike him she finds herself overwhelmed in something much closer to Homi Bhaba's third space, a space where culture, temporality and event become 'disjunctive', ambiguous, even, for her, uninterpretable.²⁷

At the Bacquang, Rowlandson's text recognises the skill and success of the Indians but struggles to decipher its meaning. Her mind's, or at least later narrative's, dwelling on it generates a complex mixture of record and meditation. At the river:

They quickly sett to cutting dry trees, to make Rafts to carry them over the river: and soon my turn came to go over: By the advantage of some brush which they had laid upon the Raft to sit upon, I did not wet my foot (which many of themselves at the other end were mid-leg deep) which cannot but be acknowledged as a favour of God to my weakned body, it being a very cold time. I was not before acquainted with such kind of doings or dangers. When thou passest through the water I will be with thee, and thorough the Rivers they shall not overflow thee, Isai. 43.2. A certain number of us got over the River that night, but it was the night after the Sabbath before all the company was got over.²⁸

Rowlandson marks for readers that she, personally, did not wet her foot, and backs up with an Isaiah verse promising safety from flood. She marks, too, the contrast between the success of the Indians in ferrying across their number on makeshift rafts and that on the very day they leave 'came the English Army after them to this River, and saw the smoak of their Wigwams, and yet this river put a stop to them' and 'God did not give them the courage or activity to go over after us'.²⁹ Rowlandson contrasts the army's failure and witnesses the Indians' success at the crossing:

And here I cannot but take notice of the strange providence of God in preserving the heathen: They were many hundreds, old and young, some sick, and some lame many had Papooses at their backs, the greatest number at this time with us, were Squaws, and they travelled with all they had, bag and baggage, and yet they got over this River aforesaid;

It troubles Rowlandson at this point, and often thereafter, that (notwithstanding the Indian deaths and sufferings that fill her text) from her point of view God repeatedly allows, and therefore facilitates, the native warriors' escape from great dangers. Rowlandson, both immersed and lost in native culture, finds that providence favours her as an individual, but punishes the political world she inhabits by favouring the native people and defeating the army.

While, in practical terms, Rowlandson implies that had the army crossed she could have been rescued, in providential terms her foot, the army and the Indians make a pattern. The day after she notes God's providential allowances to the Indians, 'moaning and lamenting, leaving farther my own Country, and travelling into the vast howling wilderness', Rowlandson knows her situation in a new way: 'I understood something of Lot's wife's Temptation, *when she looked back*'.³⁰ Having noted that her kidnappers are not punished by God, Rowlandson reflects on her own situation as subject to God's judgement. Like Rowlandson, Lot's wife was leaving devastation behind her and travelling perforce, but given that the reference is to temptation, a deeper similarity be implied. Lot's wife was commonly understood to have been punished for looking back in longing for her former life in the ways of sin. It seems, then, that the counterpointed providences of the Bacquang River prompt Rowlandson to more certainly understand her past society as ripe for divine punishment. Thus, to long for the return of a situation that precipitated the 'curses' Deuteronomy promises for a broken covenant, rather than to hope for its purification and so redemption as promised, would mean longing, like Lot's wife, to return to sin. The location of the sin seems not to be Rowlandson (though she says she has been 'careless' in her relation to God); rather, she is the unwilling, yet providentially preserved, witness to God's disapprobation of the political order she has left behind.³¹ In this situation where she has lost her family, is doubtful about the social and political order in which she lived and seems to be preserved by providence as a witness to horror and wilderness the

function of spiritual discourse, particularly the Bible, is at stake as a sole source and guarantee of interpretation.

In the wilderness the Bible is Rowlandson's spiritual waymark and she uses its words to amplify and reinforce her voice. While Deuteronomy and Job as sources of thought for Rowlandson (and the reader) are already in place, the Bacquang episode seems to be crucial in her locating the Indians, Rowlandson and her polity in relationship to those parts of the Bible. God's notable dealings at the river validate Rowlandson voicing complaint both with Job as a suffering witness and in relation to the backsliding from covenant that has led to God's punishment of the settlers. Rowlandson uses the Bible, voiced as 'lamenting', intensely after crossing the Bacquang. It gives a purchase on her situation between the eighth and about the fifteenth removes, when we read some of her most intense sufferings and thought. By this point the text is richly mulched with the matter of complaint: political solutions are beyond access because the 'army' seems to be incompetent and, connectedly, represents a mode of living for which God is exacting punishment; she is herself suffering extraordinary deprivation; her family are murdered or lost.

A description of hallucinatory experience marks alienation and disintegration when, presumably at rest 'I should suddenly leap up and run out, as if I had been at home, forgetting where I was,' then discovers herself in 'Wilderness, and Woods'. For all that she notes, 'my mind quickly returned to me', this hallucinated memory is mentioned at the lowest point. Loss, memory and silence again entwine in the eighth remove when 'As I sate amongst them, musing of things past,' her son, also captive for ransom, visits her. In this case, however, Job provides a way to put the experience into words and elevate it, as she laments with her son that:

We had Husbands and Father, and Children, and Sisters, and Friends, and Relations, and House, and Home, and many Comforts of this Life: but

now we may say, as Job, Naked came I out of my Mothers Womb, and naked shall I return.

Condensing nostalgia and anger, Rowlandson takes Job's bitterest voice as her own and the confirmation and amplification allowed by speaking with Job contrasts with her past's dissolution in musing, wordless nostalgia. The social past disappears; the cattle are gone, fields abandoned and the lost social landscape manifests God's displeasure at the breaking of the sacred covenant that organizes political life.³² The present is the punishment that can eventually, after purgative suffering, lead to collective redemption. Thus, for the reader Job's voice emerges as a language of sadness but, unavoidably, of protest. As Victoria Kahn suggests, antinomian understandings of grace allow for Job to be angry with God in the manufacturing of his assured and tested faith. Here, certainly, it is both, in some ways, the ultimate, experiential testimony and furious complaint. In using Job to cling to faith in the wilderness Rowlandson's writing asserts her state as literal and spiritual experience expressed in anger and complaint.³³

Job's voice contrasts with memory's dangerous miasma in allowing her to mark out significant moments in her journey. The twelfth remove sees Rowlandson more lost than ever, hidden in a 'mighty thicket', in the guardianship of Weetamo, described by Rowlandson as her master's singularly cruel wife but as records tell us, herself a sunksquaw, or warrior-commander.³⁴ The narrative characterises this time as one in which besides the hardship and exhaustion of life as a captive, Rowlandson is refused food and violence against her sanctioned. We read that in a dispute over the camp fire, a squaw 'threw a handful of ashes in mine eyes: I thought I should have been quite blinded...upon this, and like occasions, I hope it is not too much to say with Job, Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my Friends, for the Hand of the Lord has touched me' (19.21). Like her quotation from Job 16.2, in the third

remove), this is more of angry Job, as expounded by Theodore de Beza as indeed one 'grievously wounded by the hand of God'.³⁵

A final example vividly shows the closeness of Rowlandson's identification with Job in one of the most complex passages in the narrative.

Characteristically, the events described condense exhaustion and desperate hunger:

the Squaw was boyling Horses feet, then she cut me off a little piece, and gave one of the English Children a piece also. Being very hungry I had quickly eat up mine, but the Child could not bite it, it was so tough and sinewy, but lay sucking, gnawing, chewing and slabbering of it in the mouth and hand, then I took it of the Child, and eat it my self, and savoury it was to my taste. Then I may say as Job Chap. 6.7. The things that my soul refused to touch, are as my sorrowfull meat. Thus the Lord made that pleasant refreshing, which another time would have been an abomination. Then I went home to my mistresses Wigwam; and they told me I disgraced my master with begging, and if I did so any more, they would knock me in head: I told them, they had as good knock me in head as starve me to death.

Amongst many extraordinary scenes of desperate hunger and eating, Rowlandson's theft of food from a young 'English' captive child is perhaps the most complex. Rowlandson borrows Job's voice to explain it, but where we might expect penitence for theft from another English Christian, we find Job used it to register the good taste of things formerly disgusting. The text marks only intense loss and suffering, not moral anxiety at stealing from 'English' children. Begging may be frowned upon, but the text reserves opprobrium for those who starve Rowlandson and drive her to beg. Job's voice is used in contrast with this social opprobrium. For the reader, it picks out Rowlandson and her experience as in a spotlight, foregrounding and isolating it so that Job, here, is entirely in the possession of Rowlandson. If, like Job, she is driven to

angry protest (as in her use of 19.21), or accustomed to suffering (as here) then as this passage and God's many providences make clear, the faults that cause her suffering are not her own.

For all that it is clear that Rowlandson's experience makes her highly literate in Indian culture, she is throughout strenuous in her refusal of it. In the case of her begging, they voice the complacent morality of a hypocritical system that shows every sign of being that of Rowlandson's own quotidian world where begging by a pastor's wife, and stealing, were 'wrong'. Indeed, if we take a step back we can see that it is in fact both the 'Indian' and settler societies, combining in war, that put Rowlandson in this position. Her higher, prophetic, morality sweetens her dish. As the essays in this collection suggest, complaint is a form that voices injustice in a mode that invites empathy. The voice of Job in Rowlandson's narrative emphasises her exclusion from and possibly, in the discussion of Lot's wife, criticism of the political world of Massachusetts.

Rowlandson's final deliverance is likened explicitly to the sojourn of Daniel in the lion's den, 'or the three children in the fiery Furnace'. But underpinning the binary logic of rescue are relationships familiar from the complaint, between the larger conceptual and ethical worlds and the crises and sufferings of the subject. If, as Susan Felch helpfully discusses in this volume, we think of 'theologically-inflected' complaint as roughly divisible into prophetic (a complaint against God); petitionary (a complaint by the righteous to God), and penitential (a complaint by a penitent sinner for the deeds of his or her own people) we see the petitionary and penitential as in tandem and in tension in Rowlandson's narrative.³⁶ Put simply, the psalms and Job voice her pain, and, in speaking with Job she speaks with one who has sinned and yet has, hugely, suffered in the single subject's experience of what is promised by the covenant for all. That the book of Job was understood as dealing with the peril and potential of the sinning subject is made clear also in Calvin's sermons on Job, where his comments on a section of chapter one including verse fifteen note that

the intensity of temptation besetting the individual mean that we think that ‘Gods Angels incamp themselves about the faithfull’ to help them.³⁷ The voice of Job, then, is petitionary – Rowlandson is both suffering from God’s violence and strangely saved and favoured by him. Penitential complaint, for the wickedness of her polity, is evoked through the covenant theology of Deuteronomy which reframes the same issues of fidelity, straying and being remade within the wider question of government and law. The issues at stake in the use of Deuteronomy are what Rowlandson’s experiences, and those of her peers, disclose about the errors of the lawmakers of her community. Even as she laments with Job, Rowlandson’s use of Deuteronomy signals a political dimension to her petition and the juxtaposition of lamenting voice and covenant theology make an understanding of her as suffering for the faults of the lawgivers of her polity an at least plausible inference for a reader to draw.

Complaint heard and unheard: Publication, audience and record

If trouble from smaller matters begin to arise in me, I have something at hand to check myself with, and say, why am I troubled? It was but the other day that if I had had the world, I would have given it for my freedom, or to have been a servant to a Christian. I have learned to look beyond present and smaller troubles, and to be quieted under them, as *Moses said Exod. 14.13 Stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord.*³⁸

Thus, Rowlandson’s narrative that began with Job ends with Exodus. The verses of Exodus chapter 14 were cited in Calvin’s *Institutes* as part of instruction on self-management in prayer and are an address to the subject.³⁹ However, not only is the quotation from Exodus, the book of covenant and liberation, but it is from the chapter of Exodus in which the Israelites repine

against Moses for having brought them by the sea where they are surrounded by Pharaoh's army. Just before he stretches out his rod and parts the waters, Moses tells them: 'Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord'; so the submission of the subject is to be followed by radical action. This famous verse, as Exodus 14.14, graced the titlepage of the first edition of the Geneva Bible, that ultimate text of liberation, in a woodcut of the Israelites hemmed in my mountains right and left, pursued by Egyptians and, behind them, the Red Sea is labelled.⁴⁰ The subject must submit for God to liberate those with whom he has made a covenant. As Michael Walzer reminds us, Deuteronomy and Exodus point the way out of political 'suffering and oppression'.⁴¹ To put it literally, we can speculate on what, specifically, Rowlandson might want changed to achieve Exodus for to end with Exodus in time of trouble is not to abandon complaint, but to direct it towards the political location of God's covenanting people. Rowlandson's complaint is expressed in Biblical language in a culture that imagined that text in relation to government. To see the wider force of her complaint we can return to the politics, law and apprehensions of religious and cultural difference discussed at the start of the essay in which her published text appeared, to discuss the public context of her complaint and the life of her writings in the world.

Between the end of the war in 1676 and the publication of Rowlandson's text in 1682 much had changed. Observing rightly that settlers, like Rowlandson, put King Philip's War to work 'as a device for interpreting their cultural and political crisis' one study characterises the shift in understanding of the native people as from their being considered 'heathens' to 'savages'.⁴² The war became a highly charged tool in interpretation of Indian-settler relations. For Rowlandson part of the breaking of the covenant had indeed involved too great a closeness to 'Indians' and a misunderstanding of what she sees as the endless perfidy of 'praying Indians' one of whom, she describes as wearing a necklace, 'strung with *Christians* fingers'.⁴³ She writes:

Now have I seen that Scripture also fulfilled, *Deut.30.4.7. If any of thine be driven out to the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee. And the Lord thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them which hate thee, which persecuted thee.* Thus hath the Lord brought me and mine out of that horrible pit and hath set us in the midst of tender-hearted and compassionate Christians⁴⁴

Thus, part of what Rowlandson's complaint participates in is what Philip Round terms the post-war 'all-out ideological struggle' over whether 'Eliot's literacy mission had "civilized" Indians at all'. For her their behaviour proves their lack of Christian virtue and justifies their separateness and the revenge taken against them.⁴⁵ Her own safety, by contrast, further validates her view of God's Choice of her as preserved witness to their depravity.

In the world in which Rowlandson's text appeared all-out ideological struggle extended far beyond the settler-'Indian' relationship within the covenant – determining as that was for the native people. As it was published Massachusetts settlers were locked into a long and divisive struggle about what was, for them, a crucial matter in the interpretation of covenant theology: the issue of the half way covenant. The Halfway covenant, the agreement of some churches in 1662, to admit to communion those who had been baptised but had not (yet) had an experience of God's grace, or a conversion experience. The practice became widespread in 1677 and the son-in-law of John Cotton, Increase Mather, debated with the chief proponent of the covenant in 1679.⁴⁶ The Halfway covenant debates had huge implications for how the polity would be able to develop and the role of experiential Protestantism and theocratic authority, and within that Mather held a position more embattled and less popular than the surviving records suggest. Rowlandson did not write about the Half Way Covenant, but she did voice a zeal for rethinking and renewal of the covenant which stands as a protest against the falling away of zeal and faith

which had led to the war.⁴⁷ Moreover, Increase Mather is the person many identify as the Ter Amicum of her text's preface and as Teresa Toulouse has argued, Rowlandson's story might originally have been intended to be one of Increase Mather's book of providences.⁴⁸ So, her book certainly entered the debate and may have been designed by her sponsors to specifically intervene.

In 1682, as Teresa Toulouse notes, Increase Mather urged settlers to stop behaving like 'foolish little Birds Pecking at one another' when 'the great Kite' was waiting to devour all.⁴⁹ A further context is provided by the existential threat faced by the Massachusetts Bay colony over its charter. By 1683, a year after Rowlandson's narrative was published, the Colony faced a dire choice: it could agree to discuss changes to its governing charter that protected their independence, or have it revoked altogether. In June 1676 Edward Randolph, the agent of Charles II's government had appeared in Boston with letters from his government, bringing to an end the surprisingly long run of non-interference of the Restoration regime in a colony that had supplied and sheltered several radicals and regicides.⁵⁰ Mather favoured the 'popular' side – those who sought the more drastic course of holding fast to liberty, and apprehensions of suffering as under Lionel Cranfield, the rapacious governor imposed on collaborating nearby New Hampshire, which did collaborate, may stand behind his call to refresh the original mission through turning anew to God in the face of combined political, religious and economic threat. In this context of covenant debate and existential threat, then, Rowlandson's published complaint can be seen as harnessing it in one of Protestantism's regular uses complaining female voice. Her narrative is marketed at a moment when it is in the true church's interest to reach others, show that it is a fellowship of all who turn to Christ and are converted and reminding readers that (for Mather) fellowship is the basis for all collective action.⁵¹

Print, publicity and circulation is a final context for understanding Rowlandson's narrative in terms of complaint. Mather, for example, is

significant now because he, unlike his enemies, made effective, regular and acknowledged use of the printing press – and three of these were now present in the colonies.⁵² Indeed, the fact that he so often uses print supports the likelihood of his having taken on her project as a publishable possibility. Moreover, as Colin G. Calloway and Neal Salisbury put it, ‘colonialism entailed, indeed required, controlling how history is made’ and Rowlandson’s text is a salvo in the campaign for such control.⁵³ The significance of literacy and print is indicated, but also tellingly complicated, by the post-war trajectory of one ‘praying Indian’ who opposed the settlers: James Printer. The son of a praying Indian who was a deacon, and educated at the briefly existing Indian school at Harvard, before the war James Printer was a pressman at Harvard.⁵⁴ He negotiated on behalf of Rowlandson’s captors, with whom he sided during the war, and, gaining a pardon, returned to his printing work after the war. He probably worked on the second and third editions of Rowlandson’s narrative.⁵⁵ John Eliot, too used print, while, as we have seen, his Indian interlocutors struggled to gain control even of writing. For all that the dominant power was the controller of print we can find traces of Indian views and presence even in the print histories that exclude them. As Kerrigan reminds us, complaint has a long history as an oral form where its political force is associated with its feminised exclusion from the polity. In a letter to Robert Boyle dated 17 December 1675 Eliot writes of the Indians who had ‘fled into the woods, until they were half starved’. They had fled:

Some ungodly & unruly youth, came upon them where they were ordered by authority to be, called them forth their houses, shot at them, killed a child of godly parents wounded his mother & 4 more. The woman lifted up her hands to heaven & saide. Lord thou seest that we have neither done or said any thing against the English th[at] they th[usde]ale with us.⁵⁶

As Kathryn N. Gray notes, the events and experience delineated here resemble Rowlandson's.⁵⁷ That both women use complaint throw into relief some of the gendered features of complaint in political discourse. If Rowlandson 'speaks' with Job, she does so in print and calls upon an implication of her and Job's laments as oral.⁵⁸ In seventeenth-century England female-voiced politicised complaint has access to being understood as a voice excluded from the polity yet that convention itself locates the complaint within the domain of political discourse (in a similar way Greek tragedy uses the female voice as disenfranchised, beyond the polity, yet voicing the pain of events). The externality of the voice constitutes its location within the bounds of recognisably political discourse. The Indian woman's complaint, however, was excluded from the polity not in the dramatic gesture of being published within it (as was Rowlandson's when she was returned), but in being one of the mediated lost voices of the native subjects about whom Rowlandson complained, and with whom she shared desperate circumstances. Heard only by Eliot, the woman's complaint exists only in, perhaps only as, his words and is unformalised by the genres of writing which were, themselves, bound into the struggles over land. It is one of the fragmentary markers of distantness of records of the native people noted at this essay's opening. While historical study of New England works with landscape and contemporary oral accounts, this literary discussion focusses on texts and in doing so privileges both settler history and the genres of settler knowledge. However, although part of Rowlandson's voiced complaint involved protest against the voices of Indians, it is also in itself marked by traces of women's and men's suffering both settler and native and the framework of complaint brings to the fore some shared circumstances of political disenfranchisement and suffering, distinctly inflected.

What, then, do Rowlandson's text and the mode of complaint suggest about each other? Understanding Rowlandson's text through the lens of complaint illuminates the close connection between Rowlandson's biblical exegesis and

the political and cultural tensions in the region enabling readers to more richly historicize the text in New England's complex power dynamics. In attending to the centrality of those kinds of narrative in the New England experience the juxtaposition of Rowlandson and this woman's complaint raises the issue of how settler and tribal people's politicised complaint from this moment in early contact might be framed together. Finally, with regard to complaint, reading this experiential narrative in relation to it suggests the complaint is a framework that can be productive in framing the interrelations of politics and religion in other texts by the Civil War, such as Anna Trapnel's speeches in Whitehall.

Finally, we must consider what approaching Rowlandson's narrative from this vantage point suggest about thinking about in terms of complaint. While scholars use the paraphrase and the Jeremiad, we can substantially deepen our analysis of prophetic, narrative and experiential texts of Protestantism and link them in succinct ways to the politics of their moment if we ask whether such texts such as those by Anna Trapnel, Sarah Wightare addressing the world in the mode of complaint. If complaint needs to sit alongside captivity in thinking on Rowlandson, it can also offer a significant additional dimension to the ways in which we think about the seventeenth century writing at the borders of religion and politics.

A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs Mary Rowlandson (London, 1682)

I am grateful to the editors and particularly to Sarah Ross and the two readers for helpful and constructive comments.

¹ The London publication survives intact and is published in facsimile *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs Mary Rowlandson* (London, 1682) rpt in Wilcomb E. Washburn ed., *Narratives of North American Indian Captivities* vol 1 (New York & London: Garland, 1977). Only a few pages of the first Boston edition survives and Neal Salisbury takes the second Boston edition (1682) as the basis for his edition, used throughout this essay *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 1997). This edition is especially valuable as the only one offering supporting documentation including a Native American witnesses on Metcom's War.

² See as a selection of material using the frame of the captivity narrative: reviews of the field e.g. Robert W.G. Vail, 'Certain Indian captives of New England' in *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, series 3/63 (1944-1947), p. 113-131; Gordon M. Sayre, 'Captivity Canons', *American Quarterly* 50/4 (1998), pp. 860-867; editions, e.g. Wilcomb E. Washburn ed., *Narratives of North American Indian Captivities* vol 1 (New York & London: Garland, 1977); the critical tradition see Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature 1682-1861* (Hanover: New England University Press, 1997), Christopher Castiglia, *Bound and Determined: Captivity, Culture-Crossing, and White Womanhood from Mary Rowlandson to Patty Hearst* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), Gary L. Ebersole, *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Post-Modern Images of Indian Captivity* (Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 1995).

³ John Kerrigan, *Motives of Woe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 222-226; Sarah Ross, *Women, Poetry, and Politics in Seventeenth Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) pp. 45, 56.

⁴ For contact in this period see Katheryn N.Gray, *John Eliot and the Praying Indians of Massachusetts Bay* (Plymouth: Bucknell University Press, 2013), on non-literate forms and recovery see Matt Cohen, *The Networked Wilderness: Communicating in Early New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), esp. 1-28.

⁵ Neal Salisbury 'Introduction' to Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (Boston: St Martin's Press, 1997), p. 14-20.

⁶ Hilary E.Wyss, *Writing Indians: Literacy, Christianity and Native Community in Early America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press,2000) 173 n.10; Jill Lepore, 'Dead Men Tell no Tales: John Sassom and the fatal consequences of literacy', *American Quarterly* 46 (1994), 479-512; especially 497-502.

⁷ Richard Slotkin and James K.Folsom, *So Dreadful a Judgement Puritan Responses to King Philip's War, 1676-77* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), pp. 27-38; Richard W.Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians before King Philip's War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 198.

⁸ Henry W.Bowden and James P.Ronda eds., *John Eliot's Indian Dialogues: A Study in Cultural Interaction* (Westport & London: Greenwood Press, 1980), eg p. 121-123; Kenneth M. Morrison, 'That art of coynig Christians": John Eliot and the praying Indians of Massachusetts', *Ethnohistory* (1974) 21/2, pp. 77-92 (p. 78-9 85-88,).

⁹ See e.g. Philip H. Round, *Removable Type Histories of the Book in Indian Country, 1663-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), p. 40.

¹⁰ Richard W.Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians before King Philip's War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 198-200.

¹¹ Salisbury, p. 70.

¹² Salibsury, 'Introduction', pp. 16; 9.

¹³ 'Notebook of the Reverend John Fiske, 1644-1675' ed. Robert G.Pope, *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* XLVII (1974), p.3-235 (p.4)

¹⁴ Salisbury, p. 74.

¹⁵ Salisbury, p. 76-7.

¹⁶ Alexander Rofé trans. Harvey N.Bock, 'The Book of Deuteronomy: A Summary', *Deuteronomy: Issues and Interpretation* (London: T&J Clark, 2002), 1-14 (p. 3).

¹⁷ *The Sermons of M..John Calvin upon the fifth book of Moses called Deuteronomie* trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1583). See also Michael Besso, 'Thomas Hooker and his May 1638 sermon', *Early*

American Studies (2012) 10, pp. 194-225 (p. 209); on Calvinist reading in the later seventeenth century see Dunstan Roberts, 'Additions to the library of William Dowsing' *eBLJ* 2013 (1), pp. 1-7.

¹⁸ See discussion in B.Pitkin, 'Calvin's Mosaic Harmony: Biblical exegesis and early modern legal history', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 41/2 (2010), 441-466; summary on covenant p. 444-445.

¹⁹ Calvin, *Sermons ... upon... Deuteronomie*, pp. 1053-1054.

²⁰ On influence see Donald K. McKim, *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) especially R. Ward Holder, 'Calvin's heritage', p. 245-273 (p. 251); Carl R. Trueman, 'Calvin and Calvinism', pp. 225 -244 (p. 239).

²¹ Susan Howe, *The Birth-Mark* (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), p. 96; p. 124.

²² OED n and v

²³ Salisbury, p. 96.

²⁴ See e.g. excerpts Kerrigan p. 88,131, 135,191, 229, 235, 277.

²⁵ Salisbury, p. 78.

²⁶ Salisbury, pp. 78-79.

²⁷ Homi Bhaba, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge: London, 1994), pp. 152-3; 37-8.

²⁸ See also Salisbury, p.78-9

²⁹ Salisbury, p. 80.

³⁰ Salisbury, p. 80.

³¹ Salisbury, p. 89.

³² See Benedict Anderson, 'Exodus' *Critical Inquiry* 20/2 (1994), 314-327; especially 314-316, 325-327.

³³ Victoria Kahn, 'Job's complaint in *Paradise Regained*', *English Literary History* 76/ 3 (2009), p. 625-660, especially pp. 640-643. I am very grateful to Sarah Ross for this reference.

³⁴ John A. Strong, 'Algonquian women as sunksquaws and caretakers of the soi; the documentary evidence in the seventeenth-century records' in Susan Castillo et al eds., *Native American Women in Literature and Culture* (Porto: Fernando Pesoa Press, 1997), pp.193-203.

³⁵ Theodore de Beza, *Job Expounded* (London, ?1589), sig. Q1v. Beza's significance in New England is emphasised by Perry Miller, *The New England Mind* Cambridge, Mass.,: Harvard University Press, 1954), pp. 93, 99, 339.

³⁶ Susan M.Felch, 'Anne Lock and the Instructive Complaint', this volume ****.

³⁷ *Sermons of Master John Caluin, vpon the Booke of Job* trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1574) (BL 3165.f.14, p. 24).

³⁸ Salisbury, p. 112.

³⁹ *Institutes* trans & ed Ford Lewis Battles (London: Collins, 1986) p. 75.

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- ⁴⁰ *The Bible and Holy Scriptures* (Geneva, 1560); John Coffey, p. 31-36.
- ⁴¹ Micahel Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), pp. ix-xi; 33-4; 73-79 (ix).
- ⁴² Richard Slotkin and James K.Folsom, *So Dreadful a Judgement Puritan Responses to King Philip's War, 1676-77* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), p. 303; p.39.
- ⁴³ Salisbury, p. 98-9.
- ⁴⁴ Salisbury, p. 110
- ⁴⁵ Round, *Removable Type*, p. 40.
- ⁴⁶ Katharine Gerbner, 'Beyond the "Half-way Covenant": Church Membership, Extended Baptism and Outreach in Cambridge, Massachusetts 1655-1667' *New England Quarterly*, 85/2 (2012), pp. 281-301; p. 284; Philip F. Gura, 'Going Mr. Stoddard's Way: William Williams on Church Privileges, 1693', *William and Mary Quarterly* 5/3 (1988) pp. 489-498; 491.
- ⁴⁷ Tara Fitzpatrick, 'The Figure of Captivity: the Cultural Work of the Puritan Captivity Narrative' *American Literary History* 3/1 (1991), 1-28, p. 1.
- ⁴⁸ Teresa Toulouse, 'The Sovereignty and Goodness of God in 1682: Royal authority, female captivity, and "Creole" male identity, *English Literary History* 67/4 (2000), pp. 925-949; especially pp. 935, 939, 941. Toulouse's points concerning the context of publication stand whether or not we accept the wider argument of her piece concerning female 'passivity'.
- ⁴⁹ Increase Mather, *A Sermon Wherein is Shewed the Church of God is Sometimes the Subject of Great Persecution* (Boston, 1682), p. 20 qtd., Teresa Toulouse p. 947 and see also Toulouse's discussion.
- ⁵⁰ Michael Garibaldi Hall, *Edward Randolph and the American Colonies 1676-1703* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), p. 21-22; Michael G. Hall, *The Last American Puritan: the Life of Increase Mather* (Middletown, Conn.,: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), p. 187.
- ⁵¹ Hall, p. 190.
- ⁵² Michael Garibaldi Hall, *Edward Randolph and the American Colonies 1676-1703* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), p. 21-22; Michael G. Hall, *The Last American Puritan: the Life of Increase Mather* (Middletown, Conn.,: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), p. 119; 137-140.
- ⁵³ Colin G.Calloway and Neal Salisbury, 'Decolonizing New England Indian History' in Calloway and Salisbury eds., *Reinterpreting New England Indians and the Colonial Experience* (Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2003 vol LXXI, p. 13-24; p. 13.
- ⁵⁴ Round, *Removable*, p. 40. For more on James Printer Christine M. DeLucia, *Memory Lands: King Philip's War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 51-54.
- ⁵⁵ Salisbury, 'Introduction', p. 34-37; p. 49.
- ⁵⁶ John Eliot to Robert Boyle 17 December 1675 in Michael Hunter et al., eds., *The Correspondence of Robert Boyle* (vol 4) (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2001), pp. 400-401.

⁵⁷ Katheryn N.Gray, *John Eliot*, p. 115.

⁵⁸ Kerrigan, p. 222-226.