



Providence Tales and the Birth of American Literature

Professor James D. Hartman

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In colonial America, tales about the capture of English settlers by Native American war parties and the captives' subsequent suffering and privations were wildly popular among readers. Despite their importance in the development of American literature, however, the origins of the captivity narrative have until now been largely unexplored.

In *Providence Tales and the Birth of American Literature*, James Hartman uncovers the genesis of the captivity narrative in the English providence tale and its transformation in the seventeenth century. Exploring the cultural context in which both English providence tales and their American counterparts emerged -- focusing in particular on the way in which the providence tale folded the religious spirit of inquiry and truth-seeking into the new science and empiricism of the seventeenth century -- Hartman offers a provocative reassessment of the origins of American literature.

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