

CO-AUTHORSHIP IN “A NARRATIVE OF THE UNCOMMON SUFFERINGS  
AND SURPRIZING DELIVERANCE OF BRITON HAMMON, A NEGRO MAN”

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## ABSTRACT

A “Negro Man, a Servant” travels from Boston to Jamaica, Florida, Cuba, and London within a thirteen-year time frame. In the captivity narrative *A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon, A Negro Man*, Briton Hammon experiences many hardships during his various captivities. His is a unique experience in the captivity genre, but is critiqued because of the manner in which this narrative is produced. He did not write it himself so it is widely argued that this white genre can claim a black author but not the authority of that author’s experience.

In the book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B Du Bois portrays a two-sided man that has his own perspective, yet sees himself through others’ eyes. He describes it as “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body” (Du Bois). His aim is to explain the relationship between being an American and a Negro without a sole definition from the white perspective. This is my aim in my analysis of this text. This point of this research is to reclaim Hammon’s authorship and therefore some of his authority. Briton Hammon’s voice constitutes the two souls and the two thoughts. I will examine the narrative in four sections: The title page and preface, the encounter with Indians, the imprisonment in Spanish Cuba, and his journey home.

## DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my dad, mom, and Kelley for their love and support.

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## INTRODUCTION

Briton Hammon's *A Narrative of Uncommon Sufferings and Surprizing Deliverance* is about the captivity of a servant published in 1746 and published 1760. His journey from Boston took him to Jamaica, but on the return trip, he is captured by a group of "Indians". After five weeks with them at Cape Florida, he left on a Spanish ship. Because he is their prisoner, the Indians attempt to capture him again. Instead, they sell him to the governor of Havana for ten dollars. During his service in Spanish Cuba, he is incarcerated when he will not join the crew of a man-of-war. He is released and is employed with the governor again. He tries to escape three times, and after several confinements, he is ordered to tend to a bishop around the countryside. He finds his way onto an English ship, and the captain keeps him from the Spanish when they come to retrieve him. In his service with the English, his travels take him to London where he serves on various warships until he is wounded. When he recovers, he voyages back to New England. During this trip, he discovers he is again in the presence of his "good Master". His journey ends in his continued servitude with General Winslow, his master.

Throughout this narrative there is a fractured voice, which I attribute to a double consciousness. The white influence came from the amanuensis and the editor, and Briton Hammon contributes the actual experiences. In the book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B Du Bois portrays a two-sided man that has his own perspective, yet sees himself through others' eyes. He describes it as "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body" (Du Bois). His aim is to explain the relationship between being an American

and a Negro without a sole definition from the white perspective. This is my aim in my analysis of this text. I want to reclaim Hammon's authorship. Briton Hammon's voice constitutes the two souls and the two thoughts. They both have their own agendas that represent the warring ideals in the body of the text. Briton Hammon should be recognized as having some authority over his experiences and as a legitimate author and contributor to his narrative. His name is on the title page, but much of the authority is given to the writer and the editor.

On the surface, his story is contained in a captivity narrative, but his experiences are different from other captives in the genre. He is a black man and a servant. Outside of the identity, which is clearly stated, critics and scholars describe him as a slave, a free Black, an author, and a sailor. Sometimes he is a "prodigal slave and pious supplicant" (Black Message/White Envelope 492) His story's identity is also up for interpretation. It is described as a captivity narrative, a slave narrative, and a travel narrative. His narrative has elements of all of these genres, but it is a captivity narrative. It is especially important to know the differences between the captivity narrative and the slave narrative. The journey of a captivity narrative is cyclical while the slave narrative's plot line is linear. The captivity narrative follows a path from home, to the wilderness, and back home. The slave narrative begins with enslavement (not necessarily the act, just the experience of day to day life), then there is a turning point (mostly rebellion against the master or authority figure), and then ends in freedom.

Many of the narratives follow the same form. Title pages look alike and the preface sounds the same. Sometimes publishers copy the work of other publishers to market their own narratives. Green and Russell, Hammon's publisher, "were the nominal printers of Nathaniel Ames's popular *Astronomical Diary and Almanack*" and they had a relationship, by marriage and proximity to the publishers Fowle and Draper (Sekora 150). Fowle and Draper were "the



leading printers of captivities” (148). Green and Russell produced a Hammon’s narrative in a similar fashion to that of Fowle and Draper’s captivities. Without a formulaic way to print this narrative, there might not be a literary conversation surrounding Briton Hammon.

The captivity narrative has specific elements that are present throughout the genre. One distinction of the captivity narrative is the main character. He or she is usually European, from or associated with a European country; Anglophone, English-speaking; or white. Indians are always the antagonists. The plot starts in “civilization”, or the main character’s sense of home. The action “begins with a surprise attack and killings” (Zafar 9). In a slave narrative, the main character is usually an enslaved black man or woman. The main character is then taken into the “wilderness”, or some place that is unfamiliar and uncomfortable. God is testing the captive. “The primary purpose [for white captivity narratives] served was of proof of conversion, or election” (Zafar 21). The narratives provided entertainment, but also served as written proof of a person’s faith and membership in the community (ibid.). Another purpose is to “illustrate ‘God providence’, another, equally important element ... lay in the espousal and perpetuation of a white, Protestant ruling class” (ibid.). The captivity narrative progressed from the conversion narrative, in which Puritans would profess their faith. The captivity element was inserted because of the environment and tension between whites and Indians during the seventeenth century. The rhetorical aim of these narratives was to create model Christians, justify Puritan missions, and to warn against the wilderness. By keeping them inside the hedge of protection, Puritans would stay within their moral duties. When captured, they could be tempted to adopt the ways of their “barbarous captors.”

Their temptations would stem from the presence of Indians. Rafia Zafar cites Mary Rowlandson as an example of how Indians are represented in some captivity narratives,

“‘Infidels’ and ‘bloody heathen’ (34) ‘ravenous beasts’ and ‘barbarous creatures’ (35); ‘black’ (36), ‘inhuman’ (37), ‘merciless’ (38), ‘hideous’ (40), ‘hellish’ (42)—such are the words Mary Rowlandson, a white captive uses to describe her captors” (Zafar 23). Perpetuating the evils of Indians, the Puritans could better control their flock. They used Christian values to enlarge their congregation and to keep them in the congregation. They differentiate themselves by religion and moral standing and by skin color as well. Some have argued, “For most Black writers, Protestant Christianity with its emphasis on direct knowledge of the Bible was the primary motive for literacy” (Carretta 9). Others argue it is part of a specific formula, carried over from the conversion narrative. “From its beginnings the captivity narrative had provided a theologically powerful as well as physically useful version of Manifest Destiny” (Sekora 146). Differences in perspective allow the captivity narrative to encompass many goals such as literacy, religious conversion, and messages of white, and Puritan, superiority. “As more persons and families claimed contact with the Indians, an apparatus was needed for verification, composition, and publication” (Sekora 147).

The first chapter includes my close reading of Briton Hammon’s narrative and an exploration of the two styles of narration. I argue that the two styles of narration are parallel to the idea of double-consciousness. The “twoness” of his narration reveals a fractured voice. One part relates the details and one part relates biblical passages and attributes his escapes to “Divine Goodness”. His experience is unique to the genre, and he should be recognized as such. Some of the narratives to which he is compared are similar, but mostly in convention. He experiences the hardships whereas other captives might just be eyewitnesses to the events. The main contention is with his identity because it is blurred through these experiences, but it should not be ignored.

His identity as a black man is established on the title page, and the audience should be aware that it might affect some of the outcomes of his captivities.

The close reading is also put into conversation with John Sekora and Rafia Zafar who have written critiques on Hammon's authorship and authority. John Sekora argues, "white sponsors compel a black author to approve, to authorize white institutional power. The black message will be sealed within a white envelope" (Sekora 502). In a way, Briton Hammon represents the white agenda, but after a close reading the audience can glean his experiences. His experiences represent his autonomy. The white envelope, for me, is a way to disperse the information contained. It is influential on the surface because it is the first thing the audience sees—the form and the publishers are familiar to the audience. The black message is the content and his identity informs his experiences. His identity can be read and described many different ways, but he should not be read separately from his race; meaning he should not be read as a white captive, especially since his race is included in the narrative.

In the second chapter, I examine the text and support my arguments using feminist theory. To support my close reading, I use a postmodern approach and deconstruct the knowledge production processes. These processes include creating the narrative, creating Briton Hammon's identity, and creating his identity in his experiences with "others". By "others" I mean someone different from the privileged positions inherent in the production process—the publisher, the white protagonist. This is my connection to the text and aids my argument for the validity of experience-oriented writing. It is a discussion of "experience", identity, and the production of knowledge. Experiences and identity, in this narrative, are produced by certain power structures inherent in the narrative editing process. I agree with Shari Stone-Mediatore's her revaluing of "experience" by using Chandra Mohanty's work with writing in Third World

feminisms. She “examines how subjects can be empowered as language users and knowledge producers” (Stone-Mediatore 123). Briton Hammon, the character in the narrative, uses his language and the language that is given to him by the editors. He produces knowledge with a mixture of those languages. The mixture shows the fractured nature of his voice and leads to the discussion of how his identity and experiences are shared, but he still has agency in his telling of those experiences. This story would not be published without some of his input.

The third chapter explores the ideas of double consciousness and power in the diaspora. Using Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and W. Jeffrey Bolster in conversation with W.E.B. Du Bois’s *Souls of Black Folk*. This chapter talks about method used in the previous chapters and attempts to apply it to a larger context. The confusion with this chapter is that the narrative’s voice, or at least my argument for it, may not be applicable in a larger context. My read of Briton Hammon’s double-consciousness is similar to other concepts in terms of the power that is involved, but it is not necessarily similar in the way that the power is used upon others. There are two sides, the oppressor and the oppressed, but I am using it in a literary context. This literary context is a representation of real world experiences, which may or may not be interpreted as different from actual experiences. A retreat back into the narrative is necessary to argue my points about Hammon’s identity and voice.

Frantz Fanon’s ideas about the existence or creation of the black soul and how black men behave trouble my ideas about double-consciousness the most. His statement, “what is called the black soul is a construction by the white folk” (Fanon xviii) troubles the entire concept of double-consciousness. If this consciousness is contained inside of a black soul, and it is a white construction, I am arguing for some kind of black authority in a white construction twice. The authority over experience is easy to explain when people write it themselves, but Hammon did

not write this himself. I argue that his autonomy comes from the experiences that he communicated to the amanuensis; even though the amanuensis and the editors had some control over which parts went into the final version of this narrative. If his autonomy comes from a white construction, the black soul, and is put into another white construction, the captivity narrative, where does that leave Hammon's identity and experiences?

In spite of the third chapter, I still that Briton Hammon has a significant contribution to the African American canon whether or not he is identified as an African, American, Afro-Briton, in a slave narrative, or in a captivity narrative. This narrative has a voice that shows a double-consciousness. It may not be comparable or similar to any other situation, but that is what is unique about Briton Hammon's text. It is on the border of so many different areas—it is a great example of intersectionality. It shows the problems in the institutional power structures in fields like history and literature. There is a political stake in his experiences. He is a black author in an "Anglo-American genre"(Sekora 511), and he is portrayed as a Christian man with no other social markers. That is a significant experience for more groups than one. In this way, we can all be marginalized and devalued so it is important to recognize these processes to insist on transparency and accountability from those in power.

## CHAPTER ONE

### A CLOSE READING

He begins his journey in Boston with his master, General Winslow. His original plan was to travel from Boston, to Plymouth, then to Jamaica. On the way to “the Bay” (3) from Jamaica, his ship is stopped near Florida. He and the crew of the ship are captured, but he is the only one that survives. He escapes from their custody and into another captivity on a Spanish schooner that takes him to Havana, Cuba. While in Cuba, the natives try to claim him again, but the Governor pays them ten dollars for him. During his time there, he is incarcerated when he will not join the crew of a man-of-war. After his release, per the governor’s orders, he tends to a bishop around the countryside. His travels take him to London where he serves on various warships until he is wounded. When he recovers, he voyages back to New England. During this trip, he discovers he is again in the presence of his “good Master”. His journey ends in his continued servitude with General Winslow, his master.

This captivity narrative is argued as something outside of the black experience and is not included in the African American canon. The sources that I have put in conversation with Hammon’s text make that exclusion possible because of their perspective on the text. In this chapter, I use a close reading of the text to uncover differences in the style and tone of Briton Hammon’s narration. This disjointed narration shows that there are two styles of writing, which point to my argument about the presence of a double consciousness.

The main argument, from John Sekora, is that “Uncommon Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon” does not contain black authority and therefore not part of black American literature or African American literature (whichever term is preferred). The problems include its production, its language, and the lack of racial markers throughout the text. Sekora argues that slave narratives marginalize its main character and prevent them from having any agency within their own life writing. Agency is the control one has over their own actions and representation. Rafia Zafar writes, “The crucial difference between present-day celebrities who hire their amanuenses and the colonial autobiographers is that the former have final creative control” (Zafar 53). Briton Hammon may not have control over his representation, but he did have control over his own actions during his thirteen-year absence from his master in New England. It is still his experience that created the possibility for this narrative.

Critics like Sekora completely devalue Hammon’s experience in favor of the influence that the white editor had upon the text. “Though a dictated narrative can have all the liveliness and verisimilitude of one actually written by a former slave, it has been refracted through the lens of another individual, invariably a white, and that refraction alters its character and intent” (Zafar 53). This narrative is directly molded into a captivity narrative, but there is still an underlying experience, no matter what the original intent. Hammon is the main character and his identity is important, however marginal he may seem. The narrative is the subject. It has two authors and the double-consciousness that gives authenticity and agency to its successors.

#### Title Page and Preface

The title page of Hammon’s narrative is a significant moment that sets the tone for the rest of the narrative. It gives information about the entire narrative, but is one of the biggest

points of contention for this story. To explain this better, the following mimics the title page as it does in the electronic edition:

A  
NARRATIVE  
Of the  
UNCOMMON SUFFERINGS  
AND  
Surprizing DELIVERANCE  
OF  
*Briton Hammon*  
A Negro Man, --Servant to  
GENERAL WINSLOW  
Of Marshfield, in NEW-ENGLAND;  
Who returned to *Boston*, after having  
been absent almost Thirteen Years.

The next section of this page begins with “Containing” (Hammon). It summarizes the hardships he endured during his travels away from home. Following this summary is the publisher’s information and location. In the original, the word “Narrative” is the most prominent on the page. It is the largest text and is in bold. “Briton Hammon” is the second most prominent phrase of text. The font size is larger and the text is italicized... “Winslow”, the last name of his master, follows it. The smallest elements on the page are the most important words for his narrative, “A Negro Man, --Servant to”. His identity, for this text, originates here. His agency, or lack thereof, originates here. Many of the debates about his narrative stem from these five words. Without these words, this captivity narrative would blend into the other countless narratives with the same form.

Some readers may not see the mention of “Negro” or “Servant” and believe they are reading the narrative of a white sailor. Read in this way, the story is quite different. Hammon’s narrative, without his ethnicity, fits perfectly into the mold of previous captivity narratives. Why does the editor choose to include his race? It could be about a man facing hardships and his



providential return to the safety of home. Some still argue that his race is not included in the rest of the narrative, therefore discounting its mention so early on. Rafia Zafar writes, “the nonracial quality of his account may explain why Hammon’s narrative was published at all: colorless, it upholds a color-bounded society; a black man, himself probably a captive of European Americans, attests to the horror of Indian captivity (and by extension, the benefits of *white* ownership)” (Zafar 56). The title page only shows his race once—but it *is* included. The introduction of the main character is in the beginning of many texts. Their description presents large and seemingly small details. Do those details still matter, especially later in the text? I believe they matter. The details of a character, fictional or non-fictional, influence the author’s depiction and the audiences’ reading of that character.

Again, the captivity form keeps a circular journey from home, to the wilderness, and back home. The wilderness contains unknown fears and temptations; most dangerous are the Indians. It is important to note that the title page only mentions one apparent antagonist: the Indians. Hammon was “Cast away in the Capes of Florida”, and he endured the “horrid Cruelty and inhuman Barbarity of the Indians in murdering the Ship’s Crew”. He also endured the “Manner of his being carry’d by them into Captivity”. This follows the form of the captivity narrative. His narrative continues with an imprisonment and then his return home “with his good old Master”. While his race is mentioned once, the identity of other groups and individuals is discussed in more detail. Already, the focus is not on the main character. The title page is describing him, but in relation to others; the rest of the narrative can be read that way as well. Instead, the reading should be reframed with Hammon in the center. The juxtaposition of his character with others—Indians, Spanish, General Winslow—highlights his race while keeping the captivity form. His identity is important to the plot.

The last words of this summary are a description of his master: “who returned to New-England, a Passenger, in the same Ship”. After any description of his enslavement, there is more description of his master. In the beginning he is “a Negro Man;--Servant to GENERAL WINSLOW, of Marshfield, in NEW-ENGLAND”. In the end of this section, he met with his master, a passenger on the same ship to return home. If the story is about Briton Hammon, the master only serves to show that he is bound to a certain person. It is a reminder of Hammon’s subordinate position in life and in the events of the following narrative. There are four moments like this and each moment serves as a reminder of his status.

The narrative begins with “To the Reader”, which is a preface and caveat to the events that follow. If this is considered his contribution, he bows down to the reader’s superior intelligence two times—before and after the semicolon. The first part of his preface reminds the reader, again, that his status in life is low. “AS my Capacities and Condition of Life are very low, it cannot be expected that I should make those Remarks on the Sufferings I have met with, or the kind Providence of a good GOD for my Preservation, as one in a higher Station”. I read this like the beginning of slave narratives where the narrator needs someone to vouch for them. He is vouching for his own narrative, and he describes himself to have lower capacities than those in his audience. It can be assumed that he cannot read or write, but the white editor is not explicitly mentioned. His condition of life is low because of his torturous adventure, of thirteen years, and his recent return. This seems to be in place for those who might question the validity of the events and the reasons he survived each hardship.

He continues the preface with, “but shall leave that to the Reader as he goes along, and so I shall only relate matters of Fact as they occur to my Mind—.” Hammon is still placing himself beneath the audience in the second part, reminding the reader that they are the authority of his

story. He describes himself as a facilitator instead of an author. The narrative starts with an editorial tone. Hammon does not seem to claim control until the next paragraph in the moment he says, “with the leave of my Master, I went from Marshfield...got to Plymouth, where I immediately ship’d myself on board of a Sloop” (3). He left his master and now has control of his own journey. From then onward, he talks about himself as part of a whole until most of the crew is murdered. His inclusive description of the crew might be a signal of his actual contribution. He is a part of this crew. He knows many, if not all, of their names and points of origin. These are the “Matters of Fact” that he can relate without doubt. The “Sufferings” and “Providence” that delivered him from them, however, are not expected to come through as recalled by others in a higher station

Zafar describes this preface as, “Hammon and his amanuensis set[ting] up the limitations of the story” (55). He does not give anything else except the “Matters of Fact as they occur to my Mind”. I see the limitations differently, however. He is limited by the moments that relay more than just the facts. The second author’s words speak of more than the details of the incidents as they are happening. The form of the narrative and its historical baggage also limit him. He is described in terms of others in the title page, and his title page is described in terms of another narrative’s title page. Another publisher, Fowle and Draper, published a young man’s story in early 1760. John Sekora argues that Green and Russell, because of their close ties to Fowle and Draper, mimicked the form of his captivity narrative. Brown’s title page reads as follows:

A plain  
NARRATIVE  
Of the  
UNCOMMON SUFFERINGS  
and  
Remarkable Deliverance

of  
THOMAS BROWN  
Of Charleston, in New-England;  
Who returned to his Father's House the Beginning of Jan. 1760,  
After having been absent three Years and about eight Months:

Like Hammon, he is described in relation to someone with more influence than he might have. He returns to “his Father’s House”, which lowers his status because of his age. The next part, like Hammon's page, begins with “CONTAINING”. It summarizes his hardships and ghastly events to which he was an eyewitness. His preface excuses his narrative because of his youthful age. Sekora writes, “Neither Hammon nor Brown is permitted to possess his life story... Whatever the circumstance, the slave narrative is born into a world of literary confinement—designated by otherness, plainness, facticity, and dictated forms” (Black Message/White Envelope 488). Again, Sekora is focusing on the white influence instead of the importance of the uniqueness of Briton Hammon.

Hammon’s title page does have subtle differences from Brown’s title page. His time spent away from “home” is longer by 10 years. In the summary of his hardships, Hammon is described as experiencing these events. Brown is an eyewitness to murder and to torture, but he is a travel companion according to his title page. He “was in constant Peril of his own Life” but most of the horrors were inflicted upon someone else. Briton Hammon experienced hardships other than fatigue from travel. He is a servant/slave with a pamphlet published about part of his life. On top of that, it is one of the earliest of its kind. It is a significant experience to go through process of telling someone this tale and knowing that any of it is in print.

Rafia Zafar also argues that the “black tellers may be suspect” because the facts “have been *told* to the editor; even thought that editor may choose to leave out parts of the story and rearrange others” (54). As I have already stated, the shaping of the narrative is obviously an

issue, but the responsibility of these changes seems to fall on Hammon. When comparing his narrative to others, there is never a question about the telling of a white man or white woman's story. They are trusted at their word because of their capacity to write it themselves. Zafar does continue her statement with, "the telling itself marks a decision by the early narrator"(54). She gives narrators like Hammon a little more control than Sekora.

The mixture of white and black narration is what I call double-authorship, while others have called it co-authorship. According to Zafar, co-authored texts are not "African American in the way we twentieth-century readers tend to think of the term—again, remember Richard Wright's assertion that 'Negro literature' has to do with race hate, rejection, ignorance, segregation, discrimination, slavery, murder, fiery crosses and fear'" (Zafar 53). She continues questioning the authenticity of a text with a black author in the form of its white predecessors. She cites John Sekora's message, the "Anglo-American genre may claim black authors but not black authority" (54). Then suggests that the black narrators may not be trusted either, "The facts selected by the black tellers may be suspect, for the same reason that a slave's smiling face and tuneful whistle did not necessarily indicate happiness" (54). The way that Sekora and Zafar describe Hammon, and his intentions, continues the domination of white influence over the black author. Hammon is the subject of the narrative, so he needs to be in the center of attention. Shifting the focus from the production to its origin gives him a little credit for living through. I do agree that everyone is suspicious in the process of creation, but that is true of other captivity narratives—it is not race specific or specific to Briton Hammon.

The beginning of the narrative shows his captivity within the standards of the genre. In the body of his text, he experiences physical captivity. His encounter with the Florida Indians and the imprisonment in Havana reveal thin spots in his narration. The tone shifts and the

language is different. In these moments, the second style shows through and gives the events a different tone. Hammon and this second narrator go back and forth between details of the event and the interventions that might save him. The double authorship gives this narrative more than one perspective of his captivity. Now I will discuss how the next two moments show the double consciousness in this text.

### The Florida Indians

The encounter with the Florida Indians is the main event. It is the only captivity in the wilderness, as far as the genre is concerned. As Briton Hammon describes this incident, the flow of his speech is interrupted. In this encounter, there are two distinctly different styles. One style lists the events of the day and includes itself in a group of people. This style, I believe, is part of Hammon's contribution. The other style is more formal and describes the "Providence of God" its own treatment. I believe the second style is the editor's contribution. This shows how Hammon's experiences are fit into this narrative form. A white editor physically writes the narrative while Hammon recounts the events. This is what I call double authorship, or co-authorship, and how I am arguing for double-consciousness. The narrator is the dark body that contains "two warring ideals" (DuBois 12).

On their return journey from Jamaica, Hammon says, "we espy'd a Number of Canoes...we found them, to our very great Surprize, to be Indians of which there were Sixty; being so near them we could not possibly make our Escape". The description is very brief, but the Indians took the crew's weapons to use against them. Seeing an opportunity, Hammon "immediately jump'd overboard, chusing rather to be drowned, than to be kill'd by those barbarous and inhuman Savages". This is Hammon's first attempt to escape an apparent enemy. He takes control of his own life in this moment. He makes a choice between two deaths. The

tone has changed from listing to action because of the arrival of fear and the unknown. The editorial language enters with “barbarous and inhuman Savages”. They are described in a group; no one is distinguished. They are generalized as barbarians. In opposition to the Indians, Hammon can tell details about every crewmember and their place of origin. He brings in details from recollection. An editor is the fact-checker and embellisher. Hammon could have these feelings and use this language, but using this language is seen as tradition of this genre; this tradition makes it hard to tell where Hammon begins and the editor ends.

After he jumped ship, the Indians “kill’d the whole of the people”, yet Hammon is spared. The crew is murdered and the ship is set on fire. He calls them “Devils” for the way that they celebrate the flames. This reaction makes sense because of the camaraderie that he established with the crew. He spoke of them in terms of “we” earlier in the narrative: “We sailed”, “we was detain’d”, “We loaded”, and “we were cast away”. He presents himself as part of a whole, and the Indians attacked the crew. The way he describes this incident makes him the only survivor. He loses his participation in the group and is the sole representative of a white agenda in his journey.

John Sekora highlights this event, and his captivity that follows, as the main conflict of this narrative. He says “Briton Hammon is physically able to dictate his story only after he has escaped the ravages of the Florida Indians and returned to the sanctity of his master’s house”. Statements like this devalue Hammon’s experiences in the rest of the narrative, and by extension devalue the narrative as a whole. It suggests, “outside white civilization life is, in the preferred term of early editors, *savage*” (BM/WE 491). John Sekora makes a good point about the opposition between white and non-white within the text. Usually the white protagonist is the captive of the non-white antagonist. In his view, Briton Hammon represents white civilization.

The main goal is to caution the reader about the dangers of the unknown. The unknown, for them, is the wilderness. The wilderness contains dangerous “inhuman Savages” and “Devils”. Hammon recalls these details when he describes the Indians threatening his life, beating him, and tying him down.

In true form, the burden is eventually lifted. “The Providence of God” prevented his burning to death, “for He appeared for my Help, in this Mount of Difficulty, and they were better to me than my Fears, and soon unbound me, but set a Guard over me every Night” (7). Divine intervention saves him from death. Instead of accepting death as an escape—as he did when he jumped out of the canoe—he is thankful to be saved. The main part of the sentence seems to be the beginning, where God intervenes and helps him out of difficulty. The second agenda overshadows Hammon with Christian interests. He could be seen as a white, Christian man attempting to escape capture. The second part might be overlooked in favor of the miracle, but the Indians unbound him and set guard. Why did they do this? Is this part of the “Providence of God” or an event with other motives? It is possible that they no longer saw him as a threat, more like a part of their own group. For the next five weeks, “they us’d me pretty well, and gave me boil’d Corn, which was what they often eat themselves”. In the beginning they are threatening his life, but over time they offer him food that they are also eating. It could be a matter of limited resources, but it could also represent a sense of equality or acceptance. The argument for their limited resources shows him as a commodity, and he is product to be sold when he gets to his next destination.

His experiences with the Indians are terrible, but their description is disjointed. There are moments where a second style intervenes with “Providence” and puts him on a “Mount of Difficulty”. The Indians may have been threatening his life to prevent a struggle. He is the only



survivor, so he is some kind of capital or commodity to them (and he is, later). Hammon might be representative of white civilization because of the shape of the narrative, but he is a “Negro Man”—a “Servant” that sailed to the Caribbean. The Indians take him as a captive, no one else. This is not white civilization’s experience. White civilization influences the shape of this story. Briton Hammon had this experience. Reframing the narrative shows the double authorship and pulls Hammon closer to the center of his own experiences.

### The close Dungeon

When he is taken captive, the Indians threaten him with death, but eventually unbind him. They set a guard over him and offer him food. At this point, he wants to escape and finds that relief on a ship. He is taken to Havana and after “four Days the Indians came after me, and insisted on having me again, as I was their Prisoner” (7). The “Master” of a Spanish Schooner is his first escape from the Indians. This time he is saved by his own connections. A note on the page reveals that he knows the man “by his being taken last War by an English Privateer” (Hammon 7). His rescuer is not English or divine. His escape is his own choice, but he needs the influence of someone with power. Being associated with influential characters saves his life—and creates his life in print. This escape makes the editorial intervention of providence even more apparent. While the Indians allow him to leave on a Spanish ship, they eventually want to have him again. Hammon is not in control of his life. This loss of control is because of his cultural capital, not the white influence over him. He can be of some use to the Indians, but his use is not discussed. Instead, the Governor of “Havanna” pays “them Ten Dollars” (7). The Governor is his second escape from the Indians. The Indians sell him to the Governor. He travels from servitude to captivity and back into servitude. The servant to General Winslow is now a servant to a governor.

The two styles are also present in this moment. He relays the events, of his time in Havana, in a step-by-step list. This is Hammon's style: matter of fact and concise information. He lived with the Governor for a year. Again, he is associated with someone in a position of power, but cannot use that power. He is not in control anymore. He is given the illusion of control, as he is free to roam around. That is, until he is captured again. Hammon is imprisoned by a "Press-Gang" when he refuses to serve on one of the King's ships (8). He was in prison—"a close Dungeon"—for four years and seven months. He tried to get in touch with the Governor during that time with no relief. Then the turning point: "kind Providence so order'd it, that after I had been in this Place so long...[Mrs. Betty Howard] told the Captain of my deplorable Condition" (9). He does not give any details about his relation to Mrs. Betty Howard or the Captain. The unnamed Captain requests Hammon's release for reasons unknown. After an interrogation, with no listed details, Hammon is released. The specifics of this event seem to be erased by the presence of divine providence—the ever present editorial intervention. Whenever there are specific names, Hammon's style lists more details like a place of origin or a note about their meeting. It is important to note that there are two distinct patterns in this narrative. Two styles show different perspectives and different agendas. The details come through, but the editorial style is a distraction from the actual event.

The abduction by Indians is a difficult time for Hammon, but the imprisonment and release from the "close Dungeon" is a significant part of his journey. The Indian captivity is brief, and the language is more hostile. The captivity form seems to highlight the Indian captivity as the climax of the story, while the rest of the narrative is a rough journey home. Even the two groups of people are described differently. The Indians are cruel, but the people in Havana are not described with any hostility. He does not address his poor treatment directly and does not call

the Spanish “inhuman” or “barbarous”. He refers to the Indians as a group of people, unable or unwilling to distinguish them from each other. Yet in Havana, every person has their own purpose: the Governor is an authority figure, the Press-Gang is the force that puts him in jail, and Mrs. Howard and the Captain are his divine interventions. He does not insult any of them, but he wants to escape from them.

The influence of the editor is the reason for the interrupted style of this event. I believe that the editorial style is more hostile and more descriptive. It is an interruption in the flow of the plot. Right before he attempts to escape, “kind Providence” appears. The intervention of “Providence” seems to be the intervention of the editor. Hammon could very well be attempting a miraculous escape, and may believe that it is because of a higher power. Yet, his escapes without “Providence” are not as grandiose and miraculous. The editor creates an uncomfortable gap what Hammon could be talking about. The narrator’s agenda is fractured and it cannot relate the story easily. He attempts to escape the Governor’s service three times before he is “set a Liberty”, and that liberty is only from confinement—not from service (10). His service to the Governor and time in “confinement” is longer than his entire encounter with the Indians. Hammon mentions his “unhappy Condition”, but then says he lived well while in service to the Bishop from the Castle. Of course, he then plots to make another escape.

After his escape, “the Spaniards came along side the Beaver, and demanded me again”, just as the Indians did before. The Captain “refus’d them, and said he could not answer it, to deliver up any Englishmen under English Colours” (11). The Spaniards are a group, and he is included with the Englishmen. Various groups have claimed him and for different levels of participation. Yet, he has not claimed any other identity for himself. He has not included himself in a group since his original crew. This embellishment is another instance of an oddity in the

narrative. He cannot claim anything under the constant disruption from the second style. His tone is recovered in details about the different ships, captains, skirmishes and wounds he encountered from Jamaica to London. He lists names and numbers and even specific dates. He ships himself on each boat, commanding his own journey and searching for his own wages. He is not employed by force, but by necessity. It is important to recognize each tone and style; and the patterns in which they enter and exit. Two contributions create the double-consciousness of the narrative

### Back to New England

His voyage back to New England is not as suspicious as the text that frames the event. After his list of ships, captains, and injuries, he finds himself sick in London. Instead of listing his recovery and more employment he says, “and unhappy for me I knew nothing of my good Master’s being in London at this my very difficult Time” (Hammon 12). Why is General Winslow mentioned now? At every other difficult moment, he gets well and finds another job. This time, it seems like foreshadowing to his actual meeting on the ship bound to New England.

“I overheard some Persons on board mention the Name of Winslow...I never knew my good Master, by that Title before” (Hammon 13). When Hammon sees him, he is so overcome “that [he] could not speak to him for some Time” (13). Is hesitation really happiness or is it caution? Both Sekora and Zafar have cautioned readers about the truthfulness of the narrator. After describing the happy meeting between him and his good master, he repeats his sentiments from the preface. “I think I have not deviated from Truth, in any particular of this my narrative, and tho’ I have omitted a great many Things, yet what is wrote may suffice to convince the Reader, that I have been most grievously afflicted...”(14). This is a concluding sentiment that is not as apologetic and demeaning as the preface. It reads like a stock conclusion for a captivity

narrative. It continues with “Divine Goodness”, deliverance “out of many Dangers”, and a hope to remember it “as long as I live in the World” (14).

Sekora describes this event as, “Briton Hammon, prodigal slave and pious supplicant, walking penitently toward the home of General Winslow in Marshfield, Massachusetts...seek[ing] succor and reconciliation” (“Black Message/White Envelope” 492). After 13 years and countless wounds, seeking relief seems natural. As for the reconciliation, the captivity form orders the safe return home for each captive. He is pious in his exclamations throughout the text, which I do not believe to be his contribution. The last paragraph continues the exclamations and reads like a coda or postscript. It is a comparison of Hammon and David who is delivered “out of the Paw of the Lion and out of the Paw of the Bear”. He continues:

I am freed from a long and dreadful Captivity, among worse Savages than they;  
And am return'd to my own Native land, to Shew how Great Things the Lord hath  
done for Me; I would call upon all Men, and Say, O Magnifie the Lord with me,  
and let us Exalt his Name together! —O that Men would Praise the Lord for his  
Goodness, and for his Wonderful Works to the Children of Men!

Hammon is free from his captors, although he is still a servant to General Winslow— however much of a servant he can be with war wounds. This conclusion is like the end of a mass; like praising the Lord without an Amen. There is no end to Hammon’s captivity. As many times as he was delivered by “Providence”, he seemed to be able to escape with his own connections and decisions just as well. However, the praise that follows the divine interventions seems to mask any control he has or any choices that he makes for himself. They are still in the text, but are overshadowed by grandiose language and proclamations of salvation.

Just like the beginning, the end of his story gives more fuel to criticism. John Sekora compares Hammon’s text to captivity narratives and slave narratives, but there is no relatable white version of this story. Thomas Brown, discussed earlier, has a similar title page, preface,

and ending quote—“O that Men would Praise Him...” (Hammon 14). There are white men and women that are captured, but it is not exactly a similar experience. Briton Hammon is already bound to General Winslow. He is already in a system of lowered status and capacity for freedom. His captivity, service to the Governor, and imprisonment make him doubly bound in each occurrence. Thomas Brown cannot claim the same confinement.

Sekora also compares Briton Hammon to George White, a former slave who “struggles toward a personal memoir” (“Black Message/White Envelope” 490). “Using a mandated form, White attempts to fulfill all requirements of the ministerial life. Yet because he is a former slave, his story cannot fit precisely the conventional mold” (490). He is using this statement to give White credit for penning his own story in spite of the form that limits its telling. It is entitled, *A Brief Account of the Life, Experiences, Travels, and Gospel Labors of George White, an African. Written by Himself and Revised by a Friend*. His title specifies that it is “Revised by a Friend”, but it also says “Written By Himself”. Sekora writes, “By collating slave and master texts, White’s narrative mediates the polarities of his time. His desire all along, he says, is for ‘liberty to speak from a text’” (491). He is praised because of his capacity to write, and therefore the revisions are ignored. He is eventually made a preacher, so he achieves his goals despite institutional resistance. Hammon, returns to the institution from which he came.

The form of the captivity narrative—a circular journey from home, to the wilderness, back home—has always predetermined Hammon’s journey. He is framed by a white genre, but it gives him the ability to record his life experiences. Zafar writes, “Nevertheless, the black self can materialize in a white frame, however incompletely. Deliberately or not, Hammon’s comments provide an ironic counterpoint to a formulaic story” (Zafar 55). His words are intertwined with those of another, but his comments are still the basis for the story. He is the counterpoint for

every character, or group of characters, in the text. Alone, he is the Negro man, a servant to General Winslow. His identity and agency are questioned throughout this text because of the white influence over his character and his narrative. The influence of the white editor is apparent, as I have explained by examining the weak parts in Hammon's narration. This influence is not the negative effect that Sekora and Zafar make it out to be. This influence is in other narratives that are more trusted than his, narratives that are considered part of the African American canon. Many have a unique experience described in a double-consciousness. The identities are unique, yet are contained in one mind. The two narrators are "two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body" (DuBois 12)—the body of the text.

Briton Hammon's narrative provided an opportunity and a set of standards for the initiation of the slave narrative. His is the first authored by an enslaved man of color. The autobiographical style of the slave narrative influenced traditions used by African American authors in their travel narratives and life writing. The genres that evolved from his captivity narrative contained expanded travels, bolder accusations of a different captor, and are still accused of being suspicious for one reason or another. Despite readings of Briton Hammon that conclude he is merely a black author in a white genre, the double authorship and form of his captivity narrative links it to significant sub-genres of African American literature. "Again, the captivity selected is imposed by Indians, not by white Americans; then a black life is reshaped, re-written for the 'private satisfaction' of one of higher station. The pattern recurs whatever the subgenre of the narrative" ("Black Message/White Envelope" 489). No matter the text, there is always a white agenda behind it. Many critics believe that Briton Hammon's *Narrative* may be a false representation of his experiences. No matter what influence occurred, the narrative is a

landmark in literary traditions. He paved the way for the slave narrative's existence and form, as well as future African American texts.



## CHAPTER TWO

### HAMMON AND FEMINIST THEORY

The literary arguments against Briton Hammon demonstrate how he is a black author within a white genre. Those arguments devalue his contributions to his narrative and his genre. While literary critics seek to devalue Briton Hammon's experience and his identity, my goal is to show how Briton Hammon has some authority in his own experiences. Some feminist theories about experience, identity, and the production of knowledge support my view of Briton Hammon's authority. "While standpoint feminists shake the foundations of male-centered Western knowledge, postmodern thought takes these foundations apart to show what is taken for granted in their constituent elements and processes...and how knowledge is produced and made powerful" (Ramazanoglu & Holland 86). While I want to shake the foundations set by this knowledge, I also want to deconstruct the narrative to find hidden meaning. I want to analyze the discourse around the captivity narrative to unpack the narrative's fractured voice.

To support my close reading, I use a postmodern approach and deconstruct the knowledge production processes. These processes include creating the narrative, creating Briton Hammon's identity and the creation of his identity in his experiences with "others". By "others" I mean someone different from the privileged positions inherent in the production process—the publisher, the white protagonist. The first section shows, the title page and preface establish the mode of knowledge production and establish a basic identity for the main character, Briton Hammon. The second includes the Florida Indians and his imprisonment in a dungeon. They

serve as examples for the validity of experience-oriented writing. In the final section, his journey back to New England brings the discussion back to power in the production of knowledge. These three sections demonstrate how a narrative can silence marginalized actors and subjects. The double consciousness can create a hushed struggle.

### The Production of the Knowledge

The production of knowledge is an important factor to examine, especially in this text with two authors. There is power and control in the physical production of this story. Who is in power in this production? Briton Hammon dictates his story to a white amanuensis, or scribe. He is at a disadvantage in this process already. The white editor controls what he writes down and ultimately controls what is included in the final product. The danger is in the privilege positions that it creates. Linda Alcoff describes this danger when she writes:

Certain privileged locations are discursively dangerous. In particular, the practice of privileged persons speaking for or on behalf of less privileged persons has actually resulted (in many cases) in increasing or reinforcing the oppression of the group spoken for... (Alcoff 485)

The publishers are in a privileged location. They occupy a higher social status. The knowledge that they produce out of this genre, the captivity narrative, reinforces that social standing. It usually shows the superiority of white Christians and the inferior nature of Indians. This message produces dangerous generalizations that the audience believes as fact instead of one person's perspective. Because of the prevalence of the white superiority message, the audience is concerned with their fear of the unknown. I am concerned with the danger of producing those, sometimes unnecessary, fears. The title page and preface of "The Uncommon Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon" produce certain assumptions about Hammon. This small section establishes his identity and his voice. He is not a white Christian man, so his representation is misleading at times. This genre, or the archive, is the first producer

of knowledge that I find problematic. It creates standards for the oppression of less privileged peoples. The second source of contention is the white editor and its effect on the production of knowledge. John Sekora argues, the white editors are the creators of the standards for the genre, and these standards devalue Briton Hammon's voice and experience.

The title page includes information about Briton Hammon's race and his occupation. It also includes a summary of the events included in the text as well as the publisher's information. This page is when the audience decides if the narrative is worth reading. This page is where the initial judgment takes place. The critics of Hammon state that his race is not represented throughout the narrative in spite of its introduction on this page. By separating his race from his words, the meaning is lost; just as some meaning behind the text in its production. John Sekora talks about Briton Hammon as if he were in a slave narrative, but then aligns him with the white editor's agenda. This is what I mean by separating Hammon from his race. He has to represent the white agenda because of the form. He is separated because of his exclusions from black authority, no matter what genre includes his narrative.

In *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices*, Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland discuss different feminist methodological choices and the theories behind those choices. In their chapter about postmodern thought, they write, "there is no one truth, no view from nowhere, no knowledge that is separable from the specific location of its production and the power relations within which it is produced" (Ramazanoglu & Holland 90). This view opposes the humanist approaches to individuals discovering a fixed truth. Truth, in my opinion, is contextual. Truth is about perspective. It is partial knowledge. "There can be grounds for local, regional, or global knowledge, but not for 'universalizing discourse'" (Ramazanoglu & Holland 66). The way that I read Hammon's narrative, and see the support from feminist theory, may not

be the same as another person's reading of the same text with the same supporting texts. I read it as a captivity narrative that brings black Americans one step closer to creating the slave narrative. The production of this particular knowledge comes from an archive with certain standards, from a specific time, and from particular publishers.

From the seventeenth century to the late nineteenth century, the captivity narrative told a story full of universal truths about temptation and salvation. The genre became a metanarrative, "totalizing and universalizing social theories that claim to stand for all time and, presumably, places" (Ramazanoglu & Holland 93). For those who did not have captivity experiences, these pamphlets and articles were their connection to the dangers of the wilderness. The form of the title page shows the classic form of the narrative when it summarizes the events of his journey to and from New England. The title page frames the story and supports the conventions of the genre. Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes the idea of conventions best when she writes, "Whilst there may not be a unitary system there are 'rules' which help make sense of what is contained within the archive and enable 'knowledge' to be recognized. These rules can be conceived of as rules of classification, rules of framing and rules of practice" (Smith 58). The genre is the archive of information and other narratives that give standards for new texts. Briton Hammon's narrative is contained in that area because of its form and content. The message is supposed to be the same because the other narratives frame the information in similar ways.

Other narratives, however, can claim authority in this genre. The protagonists are usually white; therefore, they fit the mold and message of superiority. Some may claim edits and different versions, but the original story is portrayed as coming from their own hand. Briton Hammon is not allowed this privilege. His explanation for any discrepancies in his narrative comes in the preface "To the Reader". His capacities are low, which leads many critics discuss

that he did not physically write this. This narrative needs what Michel-Rolph Trouillot calls “a different kind of credibility” (Trouillot 8). He states that credibility sets a historical narrative apart from fiction:

The need is both contingent and necessary. It is contingent inasmuch as some narratives go back and forth over the line between fiction and history, while others occupy an undefined position that seems to deny the very existence of a line. It is necessary inasmuch as, at some point, historically specific groups of humans must decide if a particular narrative belongs to history or fiction (Trouillot 8).

It is fiction to the point that his character is created by someone else’s hand and that there some of the providential text is inserted. It is historical because it is a part of a historical literary tradition. Hammon describes this same phenomenon in his preface when he says, “it cannot be expected that I should make those Remarks on the Sufferings I have met with...as one in a higher Station (Hammon 3). Trouillot describes the superiority that Hammon is allowing within his narrative. The metanarrative is perpetuated through the power of the white producers over their narrators and “others” that they create through the process. His credibility comes from the act of publishing. He is credible because they decided to print *his* story. The publishers make decisions about what counts as a worthy text and what does not. Linda Alcoff says, “where one speaks from affects the meaning and truth of what one says, and thus one cannot assume an ability to transcend one’s location” (Alcoff 484). In the beginning, Hammon initiates a low standing and cannot step out of it. This position should affect the way the audience reads the narrative. If the body of the text erases or blurs his identity, then what is his status? The draw for his narrative is difference, even though many claim he is not represented as such.

The recognition of power in the production process is important. Hammon is subordinate in life and in print—before the narrative is dispensed and is read. The power is in the editor’s speaking for Hammon in a way that usurps his authority over his own experiences. “History, as a

social process, involves peoples in three distinct capacities: 1) as *agents*, or occupants of structural positions; 2) as *actors* in constant interface with a context; 3) as *subjects*, that is, as voices aware of their vocality” (Trouillot 23). In title page and preface, Hammon is an agent of the captivity narrative. He is the vehicle for the Christian message. He is the representative of dominance over the Indians. Yet he is still a representative of a lower class of people—lower than his editor and lower than his audience. Later in the narrative, there are moments in which he controls his actions and his voice, but he is not in control of the final product.

### The Production of Identity

Earlier, I said I read this narrative as a captivity narrative that brings black American literature closer to the creation of the slave narrative. I read Briton Hammon as a black man whose story is the vehicle for the commodification of “others”. Again, by “others” I mean someone different from the privileged positions inherent in the production process—the publisher, the white protagonist. Here, I am using it as a juxtaposition to him as a representative, however unwilling, of a white agenda. The title page and preface blur the lines between Hammon’s voice and the editor’s influence. My goal is to unsettle the boundaries between Briton Hammon and his editor.

The white editor traditionally holds all of the power, but there is a balancing act throughout the text. Hammon’s narrative is between two genres, and he is in between two identities. His identity occupies a liminal, or transitional, space in every section of the narrative. Two voices are present, but they are supposed to be representing one man’s speech. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a professor of indigenous education, discusses how this situation can be described in colonial terms. “There is a very specific spatial vocabulary of colonialism which can be assembled around three concepts: (1) the line (2) the centre, and (3) the outside” (Smith 64).

Smith discusses the importance of each: “marking boundaries” and “limits of colonial power”, “orientation to system of power”, and the people “in and oppositional relation” to the center. My goal is to put Briton Hammon in the center of my analysis. His experience is significant because he is the first of his kind. His identity and his narrative are a marker for the beginning of other genres that claim black authority.

The struggle is between two styles and their seemingly separate agendas in the narrative. To give Hammon control, I imagined the editor as a representative that Hammon allowed to write for him. However, in the case of an elected representative, Alcoff writes, the “procurement of such authorization does not render null and void all attendant problems with speaking for others. One is still interpreting the other’s situation and wishes...and so one is still creating for them a self in the presence of others” (Alcoff 486). There is still a power struggle between the two styles. The problem begins with the mediation of his identity through the eyes of the editor. Even with permission, the ideas can change—especially because of the disparity between the social statuses of the two authors. The audience further interprets the editor’s representation. In the preface, the second voice is already displaying its hold on the text. The signal of the second styles interruption, and therefore its control of the text is any mention of “Providence”. While it is important to the genre, the Christian message is secondary and disruptive if we read Hammon at the center of the text.

This is only the beginning. The establishment of his identity is a key component for the rest of the narrative. His identity does not just exist; the first page creates his identity: “A Negro Man, —Servant to General Winslow”. In the preface, the narrator elaborates on Hammon’s condition, “my Capacities and Condition of Life are very low” (Hammon 3). I describe the speaker as the narrator because I do not believe it is all Hammon’s words. The author of a text

should have authority over its words, but Hammon is lowered by his identity in the title page, and by his words in the message to the reader. It might be a matter of practice for Hammon to recognize the reality of his status, but it still seems like a power play. Alcoff writes, “A speaker’s location (which I take here to refer to their social location or social identity) has an epistemically significant impact on that speaker’s claims and can serve to either authorize or disauthorize one’s speech” (Alcoff 484). His social position is already lower than the position routinely held by the subject of a captivity narrative. He is a “Negro” and a “Servant”. Then he uses his preface to remind the audience that their judgment is what really matters, therefore lowering himself again.

“Identities should be questioned, the constitution and crossing of their boundaries examined, and their multiplicities enabled, in order to show what makes some identities powerful in relation to others, and how this power is exercised” (Ramazanoglu and Holland 92). The production of characters is a powerful position to hold. Even my judgment and explanation of these identities will be questioned and examined. As the researcher I have power over the text in a way that Hammon is not allowed. My interpretation of the text creates certain knowledge. The publishers had the initial judgment and control over what information and events occur in the text. By examining production of this narrative, the publisher’s power is revealed. They have the power to change Hammon’s identity to fit the captivity narrative mold. Changing the original story, in any way, changes the authority he has over it and possibly changes the meaning of his experiences. Hammon is not allowed to produce the whole of his identity, but his voice still shows his influences and contributions throughout the text.

#### “Experience” with “Others”

The next two events are significant experiences in his life. The literary conversation devalues these experiences, but the genre is based on experience-oriented texts. Briton Hammons



text seems to be the only experience held to different standards. This section includes Briton Hammon's narrative include his encounter with the Florida Indians and his many confinements in Spanish prisons. The Indian encounter is the highlight of the narrative. It creates the climax and follows the standards set by previous narratives. The main character must be captured. The imprisonment in the "close Dungeon" is lengthy and upon his release he is repeatedly confined by the Spaniards. These experiences mean different things in respect to the genre. The Florida Indians are the antagonists of the story. The Spaniards seem to be an obstacle to overcome before he journeys to London and eventually to New England. Experience, as a concept, is a significant part of Briton Hammon's narrative. It gives Briton Hammon authority in his narrative, even if it is portrayed in a fractured voice.

In her essay "Experience", Joan W. Scott argues, "It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience" (Scott 273). In this way, Briton Hammon did not have the experiences that are written in this text, but these experiences make up his identity. According to critics of the narrative, this is true. His identity is blurred by his representation through these experiences, and the events become the focal point of the narrative. Instead of focusing on what happens to him, the audience is directed to the habits of the Indians or the Spaniards or "kind Providence". Hammon is marginal. This reinforces his constantly lowered status. "The evidence of experience becomes the evidence for the fact of difference" and "the evidence of experience...reproduces rather than contests given ideological systems" (Scott 273). Without questioning the processes and ideologies behind this experience, of course the same knowledge will be reproduced.

I disagree with the notion that experience is nothing other than categories that are already available. Identity is mediated through representation not created by it. "From feminist

epistemology, we have learned that experience is not a truth that precedes culturally given representations of experience but is actually mediated by those representations” (Stone-Mediatore 117). Experience is a process that is informed by perception and expectation. Shari Stone-Mediatore revalues experience by using Chandra Mohanty’s analysis of the role of writing in Third World feminisms. Mohanty “addresses the role of discursive practices in constituting subjectivities; she also examines how subjects can be empowered as language users and knowledge producers” (Stone-Mediatore 123). Hammon is produced with a certain influence, yet he becomes the focus of the debate. He used the language, he produced this knowledge, but he did not do it alone. The co-authorship makes the narrative a shared experience, but it does not get him out of responsibility for what he says. Why is his experience devalued? Hammon’s experience is valid and legitimate enough to claim some kind of authority—it was published. As I discussed earlier, he marks the inroad to other genres that can claim black authority. Many characteristics of prominent black authors’ work can be traced back to the slave narrative and ultimately Briton Hammon’s narrative. His experience is an example of double-consciousness embodied within a text.

His co-authored experience is mediated through the representations of other marginalized groups in his text. Briton Hammon is not described throughout the text: his master, the Indians, the Press-Gang, the Governor, and various Captains. The audience must make their own judgment, as he said in the preface, as to who he is and what these events mean. The Florida Indians are portrayed as “barbarous”, “inhuman”, and “Devils” (Hammon 6-7) because of their treatment of Hammon and the ship’s crew. While in Havana, Hammon is imprisoned for four years and seven months, but there is no mention of his thoughts on their morality. He simply puts himself below their social standing. “Others” are supposed to contrast Hammon’s character, but

they contrast with the white editorial voice. Patricia Leavy writes, “In every text, some things are affirmed, such as truth, meaning, authorship, and authority; however, there is always an ‘other’, something else, that contrasts that which is affirmed” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 90). Contrary to his established status as a lowly servant, he only directly interacts with people in positions of power: the Governor, a Press-Gang, a bishop, and the captains of numerous ships. Sometimes, he has power by association. The power shifts from editorial intervention to providence of his making. These connections give him the ability to navigate his way out of captivity, a dungeon, and a few confinements. I differentiate between them all because each experience is different.

In review, the Florida Indians capture Briton Hammon. The Press Gang puts him in a “close Dungeon” for refusing to serve on a Spanish ship. The Governor of Havana confines him for his escape attempts. His bondage and his escapes are unique experiences. Whether he needs to or not, he always wants to escape. His need to escape shows that there is something wrong with his surroundings. These stereotypes continue if they are read on the surface. Joan Scott states, “Stories of marginalized persons’ experiences (both personal narratives and the histories that draw on these) reinscribe the assumptions about identities, differences, and autonomous subjects that underlie available discourses (Scott 273). The stories only perpetuate these stereotypes if they go unexamined.

Feminist research and postmodern thought question the underlying assumptions and traditions of histories. Many characteristics of prominent black authors’ work can be traced back to the slave narrative and ultimately Briton Hammon’s narrative. Double-consciousness is the characteristic that shows in this narrative, and it serves as a clearer lens through which I view Briton Hammon’s narration. “Mohanty emphasizes that ‘the point is not just ‘to record’ one’s history of struggle, or consciousness, but how they are recorded; the way we read, receive and

disseminate such imaginative records is immensely important” (Stone-Mediatore 130). The point of the narrative is to show the captivity experience. His narrative shows that experience from three different angles. He is a servant, he is a captive, and he is a prisoner. The way these experiences are described, however, servitude and imprisonment less important than the captivity experience.

How we write down the material may be the guide for how to read the material. The practice for publishers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century is to fit a story into their mold. They take over a possible cultural experience, and fit it into something to which their audience can possibly relate. “Research ‘through imperial eyes’ describes an approach which assumes that Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings” (Smith 64). Hammon takes on this ‘imperial’ lens when he is berating the Florida Indians. Although it is not the point of my research, the original question for me was “Does *he* feel this way? Or is this the editorial influence?” The point is to examine how he is represented in this, not to extract original intent. In this production, the influence is not necessarily directly on Briton Hammon, the man. The influence is upon Briton Hammon, “a Negro Man,--Servant to General Winslow”. The latter is a construction of Briton Hammon, the man, that furthers a publisher’s agenda and not necessarily his own—whatever that may have been. The discourse that surrounds this genre is imperialist. It is “imbued with an ‘attitude’ and a ‘spirit’ which assumes a certain ownership of the entire world, and which has established systems and forms of governance which embed that attitude in institutional practices” (Smith 66). Narratives like this take over an experience and attempt to make it something that fits the publisher’s agenda, even if there is little left of the original story.

His experiences create opportunities for his identity to reveal itself. He becomes more than simply “A Negro Man,--Servant to General Winslow”. That simple identity is established in the beginning. “Each identity has a particular history in a particular culture; it is a state of becoming rather than one of being” (Ramazanoglu and Holland 92). After his experiences are described, he is still a black man and a servant but he is also a captivity survivor. He is a veteran—he has the wounds to prove it. He is a sailor. Talking about it this way, his experiences seem to make up who he is. Without already knowing about his race and his status, these events would be read completely differently. His identity influences how we read these events. These experiences allow the reader to relate to him and see him as something more. Double consciousness is the ultimate experience for this narrative, and many others. It is contained in every moment. The two authors describe different aspects every moment. Hammon’s voice lists the details and the editor’s voice inserts biblical references to appease the standards and the audience. The audience has to believe the story to want to read more. His experience on the way back to New England is not much other than a conclusion masked by Providence and complete silence from Hammon’s voice.

The language of the editors produces Hammon, and his identity is created by his representation against “other” groups within this narrative. Scott argues that the representation of marginalized peoples reinscribes the stereotypes for those peoples. Hammon does not represent the stereotype because, for the most part, he is not represented as an enslaved black man. The stereotypes that are being perpetuated are those of the “others”. When talking about these “others” the language that is used positions Hammon as their opposition. He is in a marginalized place, in the narrative and in his occupation as a servant, but talks about “others” as if they were vastly different from himself. This shows the disjointed traits in Hammon’s voice.

## Providence and Marginalization

Briton Hammon's journey back to New England is another experience that highlights this narrative's double consciousness. The co-authorship shows through the experience of the journey followed by the grandiose last page. The journey is another list of events through Hammon's voice, and the last page is another part of the captivity narrative convention. The journey back is a transition from Hammon's ability to experience into a final page of marginalizing his voice. He returns with General Winslow. He returns to his original status. Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes that his book, *Silencing the Past* "deals with the many ways in which the production of historical narratives involves the uneven contribution of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means of production" (Trouillot xix) This is how I see the last section of this story. It is a historical narrative produced with uneven contributions and representations from both authors. The end is a reminder of the entire adventure and all of the possibilities for omission.

This experience, in the patterns that I have seen, seems like one of the biggest inserts in the entire narrative. The ending shows a reunion with his master and his loyalty to the message of "Divine Goodness". After this long journey, Briton Hammon is "joyfully verify'd by a happy Sight"—his master (Hammon 14). The event is an experience. The question is not whether or not this actually happened, or if he felt this way. He could be happy for some relief and familiarity. His master is also "exceedingly glad... telling me I was like one arose from the Dead" (14). This experience is, like many others, continuing the stereotype of the superior morality of the white elite. General Winslow represents the safety of community. He represents the protection from captivity, even though his protection is another type of confinement. Shari Stone-Mediatore writes, "experience-oriented writing brings into public discussion questions and concerns

excluded in dominant ideologies, ideologies which sustain and are sustained by political and economic hierarchies” (Stone-Mediatore 126). To break down the hierarchies in the text, examine the experiences and examine the identities. The presence of two authors, two mediated knowledges, will inevitably overlap and create moments of weakness. These moments indicate Hammon’s invisibility in his story.

This overlap is present in the last two paragraphs. Hammon gives a final statement, “I think I have not deviated from Truth, in any particular of this my Narrative” (Hammon 14). This message is a convention of the genre. The audience receives a reminder, like in the beginning, that they make decisions about the worth of this narrative. Then Hammon writes, “and tho’ I have omitted a great many Things, yet what is wrote may suffice to convince the Reader, that I have been most grievously afflicted...”(14). This is his last plea to consider his story. This is the point where I consider it to be in its most genuine form. The combination of the narrative and Hammon’s voice has the same agenda—to tell some version of a truth. He and the editor admit to some omissions, although he may not have been able to control that aspect of production. Hammon’s voice exits afterward as the attention turns from him to the “Divine Goodness” and the “Providence of that GOD, who delivered his Servant David out of the Paw of the Lion and out of the Paw of the Bear” (14). The focus of the ending is on the message of Christian loyalty and praise to God. Hammon’s story could have ended on the thirteenth page. The fourteenth page puts Hammon to the side in favor of the captivity form.

The genre—or the form—allows little room for deviation. The main character starts inside their community, ventures willingly or unwillingly outside of that haven, and returns home because of divine intervention. This genre creates a system of patterns to follow. “Systems of classification and representation enable different traditions or fragments of traditions to be

retrieved and reformulated in different contexts as discourses, and then to be played out in systems of power and domination, with real material consequences for colonized peoples” (Smith 59). This statement shows how traditions from the conversion narrative passed to the captivity narrative and onto the slave narrative. Little pieces from each genre connect to the others. John Sekora compares Briton Hammon to his peers within the captivity narrative and slave narrative genres. Sekora falls short in some of his comparisons, however, and does not compare them in the same ways. The captivity narratives are compared with Hammon’s genre because of the traditions, but the characters do not have relatable experiences as a whole. The white protagonists in the captivity narratives are not doubly bound. Some of them have the same co-authorship situation, but it does not have the same meaning. It is a unique experience for Briton Hammon. The white influence in other narratives is in the same context, the captivity genre, but does not constitute the same experience.

The white influence constitutes a significant power in this text. There have been a couple of instances where Hammon’s voice is especially marginalized. These moments are where there is some kind of divine intervention. When Hammon does not use his own method of escape, there is a break in the style of narration. It reads like a weak point or a moment where he is not believable. The Indians “intended to roast [him] alive. But the Providence of God order’d it otherways” (Hammon 7). They represent his opposition. They are barbarous and he is pious. The Lord is watching out for him and will deliver him from this evil. The Lord also intervenes to allow his release out of the close Dungeon. The very end of major hardships happens because of divine intervention.

Another instance of his marginalization is the absence of identity from most of the text. The beginning briefly describes him, the middle blurs his identity, and the end celebrates him as



a person who does not think he has “deviated from the Truth” (Hammon 14). The claims of truth and higher powers and miraculous safety put him in high status. His identity is not the same as in the beginning. This representation is higher than the servant Briton Hammon. “Humanistic explanations separate people out from the world around them, and place humanity on a higher plane (than animals and plants) because of such characteristics as language and reason” (Smith 60). The conventions of the captivity narrative separate the “Devils” from those who witness “kind Providence”. A humanist point of view explains the conventions of a narrative that uses its beliefs against those who are different from them. The Florida Indians shout like Devils in opposition to Briton Hammon. He is portrayed as a Christian man throughout the narrative by citing “Providence”. In the end, he calls on all men to worship and “Praise the Lord for His Goodness” (Hammon 14).

The genre requires a divine resolution. He has to return home. He must come full circle, which means he must return to his status as a “Servant to General Winslow”. The last two paragraphs are mimicked from other narratives. The narrative ends just as it begins—a statement about the authenticity of his narrative that ultimately gives authority to his audience. He is both present and absent. The “presences and absences embodied in sources...or archives...are neither neutral or natural. They are created” (Trouillot 48). He is created to be a vehicle for a certain message. The details of his story fill the form. Hammon is required to be hidden in some parts because the publisher has a mission. Double consciousness creates the opportunity for his invisibility. The narrative is whole because of the two authors, but tension is created by differences in their contributions.

His narrative is framed by a certain set of assumptions and standards that limit his representation and his claims to authority. When deconstructed, this frame is simply another

form of captivity for Briton Hammon. This frame makes it possible for Hammon's voice to be hidden. However, "histories should be questioned", their "boundaries examined, and their multiplicities enabled, in order to show what makes some identities powerful in relation to others" (Ramazanoglu & Holland 92). Postmodern thought, in combination with feminist theories of "experience", aid in the careful examination of the influence that limits this text. The insertion of biblical references and the apologies for omission or style are just words without the power behind it. The editorial influence makes them mean something different, something that keeps Hammon's full story from recognition.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes, that "Words are not concepts and concepts are not words: between the two are the layers of theory accumulated throughout the ages" (Trouillot 4). Each word not spoken by Briton Hammon adds different meanings to this story. He becomes stifled throughout the text and silent in the end. A narrative can inhibit marginalized actors and subjects. He is sidelined by the repetitious style created by the archive. "When we recognize stories of experience to be resources for reordering experience, then we can avoid the 'robot' repetition of others' views" (Stone-Mediatore 129). In literary arguments, the genre can claim authority over its narratives. The majority of captivity narratives can claim authority over their experiences. The point of these stories is for the audience to relate to the characters and heed the warnings shown by the dangers of the unknown. Hammon experienced these events and the co-authorship of this narrative creates a struggle for his narration. That struggle ultimately allows his narrator to have some experiential authority.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE BLACK ATLANTIC

In his book, *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy writes that double consciousness is “only the best-known resolution of a familiar problem which points towards the core dynamic of racial oppression as well as the fundamental antinomy of diaspora blacks” (Gilroy 30). Double consciousness is about the internalization of the American identity, a “twoness” that Gilroy says Du Bois uses “as a means to animate a dream of global co-operation among peoples of color” (126). This global setting, for purposes of this essay, is the Black Atlantic. If one hears the words “Black Atlantic” what image comes to mind? Is it free men traveling around the world? Is it slave ships or pirates? W. Jeffrey Bolster writes, ““In lieu of these politically astute and worldly black sailors, an image of manacled ancestors crammed together aboard slave ships has triumphed as the association of African Americans with the sea” (Bolster 2). When set in the context of a larger picture, how does the view of the narrative change if it is set in context with other locations throughout and across the Atlantic?

The black Atlantic is an “intercultural and transnational formation” (Gilroy ix). I think of it like Benedict Anderson’s idea of an “imagined” community. It invokes a sense of belonging. It is a group of different countries and peoples that have similar experiences and “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 7). Briton Hammon, and black sailors like him traveled around the world. Hammon’s text states, “with the leave of my Master, I went from Marshfield, with an Intention to go a Voyage to Sea” (Hammon 3). The experiences that follow

are unique to Hammon, but in the scope of this narrative the encounters are contained in a literary bubble. He is harmed, but the ending is nice and there is a congregation of praise. Many people are not so lucky. The images of slaves crammed on ships reinforce the same kinds of stereotypes that are reinforced in his narrative. “It reinforces whites’ belief that blacks were acted on, rather than acting; that blacks aboard ship sailed as commodities rather than seamen. Yet until the Civil War black sailors were central to African Americans’ sense of self, economic survival, and freedom struggle—indeed central to the very creation of black America” (Bolster 2). His situation is contained, but the structures of power and oppression are very widespread. He is not alone in his mediated representation.

In *Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois discusses, among other things, the struggles of black men with a double consciousness. He writes,

Here, in America, in the few days since Emancipation, the black man’s turning hither and thither in hesitant and doubtful striving has often made his very strength lose effectiveness, to seem like absence of power, like weakness. And yet it is not weakness, —it is the contradiction of double aims (Du Bois 7)

The contradiction of double aims, in this narrative, is portrayed as two voices narrating the story of Briton Hammon. This white influence is a negative force to some critics, and a means to an end for others. A discussion of what Du Bois calls “double aims” is also found in the work of Edward Said, Paul Gilroy, Jane Tompkins, and Frantz. They all discuss it differently, but the concept remains. There is always “twoness” to issues viewed through mediation and some have solutions to this separation of motives.

Edward Said, a literary theoretician, coined the term and wrote the book on Orientalism. Orientalism is “a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience” (Said 1). The idea behind this is postcolonial theory and how the West has preconceived notions without meeting a people. It is about how anyone comes

to understand a people who look different from the norms of the Western lens, especially by judging their skin. Orientalism is “an academic tradition” and it is “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident’” (Said 2). The main relation to Briton Hammon is the discussion of mediated representation. Representations of the Orient, and Orientalism, are distorted through a Western lens just as Briton Hammon is distorted through a culturally different lens.

Said writes about an encyclopedic description of Orientalism, “Schwab’s notion is that ‘Oriental’ identifies an amateur or professional enthusiasm for everything Asiatic, which was wonderfully synonymous with the exotic, the mysterious, the profound, the seminal” (Said 51). He mentions the word mysterious eight times within this book, and it is always the representation for those who have been and have not been in the Orient. There are two different versions, yet they contain the same message. Briton Hammon has been to many places and met varied peoples, yet they are portrayed just as they would be in another captivity narrative. How do we come to understand people who look different, especially their skin? We know because of motivated structures, like racism, that embed into cultural practices. Literature is one of those cultural practices.

Mary Louise Pratt describes this kind of narrative as “experiential” in opposition to informational texts. “It constitutes its authority by anchoring itself not in informational orders but in situated human subjects, notably (but not always) the European protagonist” (Pratt 150). In the context of North American captivities Jane Tompkins cites James Axtell in his discussion of the privilege, not horror, of being capture by Indians and taken into the wilderness.

Axtell’s reconstruction of the process by which Indians taught European captives to feel comfortable in the wilderness, first taking their shoes away and given them moccasins, carrying the children on their backs, sharing the scanty food supply equally, ceremonially cleansing them of their old identities...all of this creates a

compelling portrait of Indian culture and helps to explain the extraordinary attraction that Indian culture apparently exercised over Europeans (Tompkins 68).

Hammon's Indians are not portrayed like this. His are "inhuman". Even the representation of them being his, is a perpetuation of the problem in the text. They do not belong to him and there are two sides to their representation. Even the Indians are represented in a negative fashion to elevate Briton Hammon's status in this narrative—after he does the work to lower himself for the audience.

There are many different representations of Briton Hammon, and his narrative. Some say his is a story of captivity and others argue it is a slave narrative. In a captivity narrative, the journey is cyclical; the main character always returns home. In a slave narrative, the journey is linear; there is a beginning, a turning point, and then the character is free. Hammon's journey ends where he began, so the form is a captivity narrative. He is not free in the end, but his story depicts the experiences of a "Servant" —a "Negro... Servant". This is another matter of perspective and opinion. If he is a black servant, is he automatically a slave? Vincent Carretta, in *Unchained Voices*, describes him as a "free Black" who "was willing to take employment on a slave-trading ship" (Carretta 2). Hammon's voice, throughout the narrative, talks in terms of employment. It is the only marker, other than his race, with which the audience can relate. It is only because of this confusion that there is a discussion of his double consciousness at all. If the publishers followed a different formula and left out "Negro", the double authorship may be a less edited version. Many of the white captives penned their own stories, but the white influence would be less problematic; not unproblematic, but perhaps less.

Frantz Fanon troubles the entire idea of double consciousness when he asserts, "what is called the black soul is a construction by white folk" (Fanon xviii). He claims that the essential qualities of the Negro, celebrated by Negritude are "European fantasy"(viii). Negritude is the

system of thought that found black solidarity in a common black identity (viii). It is founded by black intellectuals, but Fanon argues it is a construction. It, too, is a creation of white influence. “The dominant colonial culture, he argued, identifies black skin of the Negro with impurity; and the Antilleans accept this association and so come to despise themselves” (Fanon ix). The preface can be read as a convention and an inferiority complex. He bows to the audience in hope of their approval. They are unhappy with themselves because of the ever-present comparison to a skin color and history that they cannot attain. This is part of the warring ideals that Du Bois describes. Paul Gilroy states, “Double consciousness emerges from the unhappy symbiosis between three modes of thinking, being and seeing” (Gilroy 127). The first is particular to the person, the second is from the nation-state and citizenship laws, the third is diasporic (127). Du Bois’s use of “the color line” shows all of these relationships at once. It is the veil between black and white all around the world, in any context.

In the context of the small, yet well-traveled, world of this narrative, the double consciousness is a matter of hindsight. Briton Hammon does not describe these feelings and does not claim any textual identity throughout the narrative. The stories and contexts parallel each other. The production of these knowledges is seen through a specific lens, the lens of the dominant group of the geographic and societal area. The shift in parts of this narrative only hints at the lens. The history of the genre lays out standards and traditions that show the lens. The moments where Briton Hammon is constructed as opposite highlights the unhappy place of double consciousness from the “other” side.

#### “Othering” Across the Atlantic

In this section, the “othering” of the Indians and the Spaniards reveals the disjointed representation of Hammon. As discussed in an earlier chapter, “othering” is a process in which

someone is portrayed as inherently different from the privileged positions in the narrative—the publisher, the white protagonist. This “othering” shows his experience through different consciousnesses, but it does not include the black man’s experience directly. This is part of the struggle of Hammon’s character; he is not always allowed to relate the whole story with one uniform style. “Ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the black man, since it ignores the lived experience. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man”(Fanon 90). The two encounters with “others” in this text are in relation to Hammon representing the protagonistic place of the white man. In a larger context, Briton Hammon’s peers, black sailors, are considered to be placed in these positions. “Actively contributing to the Atlantic maritime culture shared by all seamen, African Americans were at times outsiders within it” (Bolster 5). W. Jeffrey Bolster puts Briton Hammon in the context of black sailors in “plantation America”. Hammon is close with his crewmates, knows their names, and their places of origin. He describes one man, after his death, as a mulatto and other men as strangers. It seems as if he uses location and ethnicity as markers of who is worth remembrance. Hammon, the co-authored man, is in a powerful position in some sections of the text.

Frantz Fanon places black men in a different colonial context, “The black man possesses two dimensions: one with his fellow Blacks, the other with the Whites. A black man behaves differently with a white man than he does with another black man. There is no doubt whatsoever that this fissiparousness is a direct consequence of the colonial undertaking.” This means that to begin with there is a man. When this man is with black men, he acts a certain way, and when he is with white men he acts a certain way. The way that Fanon describes it—fissiparousness—shows that this man breaks off into two separate bodies, not two separate consciousnesses. Hammon’s voice acts this way in his narrative, but in consciousness. This voice is fractured



which creates a struggle between the differences of their agendas and makes an incoherent style throughout Hammon's text.

“Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through” (Du Bois 4). Briton Hammon is different from other men in that he is a black man portrayed as the main character in captivity narrative. W.E.B. Du Bois marks the difference between him and the others around him with a veil—an abstract idea that separates two peoples. Each can see the other side, but is either unwilling or has no desire to cross to the other side. Hammon does not need to creep through as he is on one side, but the veil is not always a marker of race like it is for Du Bois. The narrative has placed veils in between Hammon and “others”—General Winslow, the Indians, and the Spaniards. This veil is dependent on representation of the “other”. This separation is a marker of status. This is the process of “othering”.

As a sailor, Hammon could, “constantly [cross] cultural and geographic boundaries as [he] maneuvered between white and black societies ashore and maritime society afloat” (Bolster 35). He seems to maneuver this way on the ship, but ashore he is not as agile. He is a different character when he is not in his element. He is different when he is not representing himself and his knowledge of ships and captains. Bolster writes:

Briton Hammon defined himself as one of ‘the people’ collectively chiding the captain; in Spanish Cuba, as an Englishman and slave desperate to escape; in Indian camps, a civilized man; in New England, ‘a Negro Man’; and aboard the slaver on which he enlisted, a free seaman on wages or a Briton—not a captive African (Bolster 35).

He leaves out the sense of unified identity that black seamen contributed to in most other descriptions from this chapter. Hammon is not supposed to contribute to that community, for he

is not represented as part of that community. In all of these instances he is supposed to represent the agenda of the white editors. Hammon learns the consequences of his journey away from home when he is captured, imprisoned, and wounded in battle.

He continuously represents the Indians as a group and the Spaniard as individuals. Mary Louise Pratt describes this when she writes, “The people to be othered are homogenized into a collective ‘they’, which is distilled even further into an iconic ‘he’ (the standardized adult male specimen). This abstracted ‘he’/ ‘they’ is the subject to verbs in a timeless present tense, which characterizes anything ‘he’ is or does not as a particular historical even but as an instance of a pre-given custom or trait” (Pratt 139). This goes for anyone describing others, but both narrators describe the Indians in this way. The Spaniards are a set of influential individuals, but the Indians are a homogenous group with “pre-given” behaviors. These behaviors are predictable, according to captivity narratives. Their characteristics are engrained in the form of this narrative. When they burn the ship, or shout, or threaten to kill him, the audience is not surprised. “Manners-and-customs description could serve as a paradigmatic case of the ways in which ideology normalizes, codifies, and reifies” (140). Pratt offers a motivation for their description. By normalizing the Indians in this way, their behavior becomes predictable. His audience is conditioned to expect this behavior. “The portrait of manners and customs is a normalizing discourse, whose work is to codify the difference, to fix the Other in a timeless present where all ‘his’ actions and reactions are repetitions of ‘his’ normal habits” (Pratt 139). The archive normalizes, yet sensationalizes, the behavior of the Indians. Why would the audience expect anything different from the Indians after years of reading the same actions? In this way there is a double standard for othering within this text. Is this because of religious beliefs?

An argument can be made for any motivation. “According to Robert Berkhofer in *The White Man’s Indians*, these divergent reports can be explained by looking at the authors’ motives” (Tompkins 72). Jane Tompkins cites Berkhofer and suggests that it depends if the author wants to promote the environment in America, or “wishes to convince his readers that the Indians are in need of conversion, paints them as benighted agents of the devil” (72). In Hammon’s perspective, the only devils were the Indians. On the other hand, the Spaniards are absent from most discussions about this narrative. They are the absent other, only mentioned because they bought Hammon from the inhuman Indians.

From their description, or lack thereof, one could assume that the Spaniards are considered more civilized than the Indians. Hammon portrays the Spanish officers and men as cruel when he is imprisoned, but otherwise they are merely his employers. “The problem of colonization, therefore, comprises not only the intersection of historical and objective conditions but also man’s attitude toward these conditions” (Fanon 65). These men treat him poorly, but his reaction shows that the climactic encounter with the Indians is in the past. The Spaniards are not as important. They remain nameless, and their occupation stands in for their names: the Governor, Press-Gang, Bishop, Captain, Lieutenant. They are just a means of employment—and confinement at times. After their murder, Hammon lists the names, and origins, of seven crewmembers along with his captain. Captain Romond helped him escape the Florida Indians. Mrs. Betty Howard initiated contact with a Captain that released Hammon from the dungeon. Of Course, General Winslow is the first and last name recognized in the narrative, other than Briton Hammon. Fanon also says, “The black man wants to be white” (xiii). If read this way, Hammon could be represented as wanting to be white instead of represented as the white figure, and he is only associating with those in positions of power. These names are important because they aid in

his escapes, therefore his general safety. Besides divine intervention, these names represent Hammon's connections.

W.E.B Du Bois makes a poignant statement, in *Souls of Black Folk*, which applies to this section:

Work, culture, liberty, --all these we need, not singly but together, not successively but together, each growing and aiding each, and all striving toward that vaster ideal that swims before the Negro people, the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying ideal of Race;...not in opposition to or contempt for other races, but rather in large conformity (12).

Work, culture, and liberty are the three most important themes of this narrative, especially in Hammon's encounters with the Indians and the Spanish. He is working when he is captured, he is commodity within the capturing cultures, and his partial liberty is aided by the idea of a brotherhood that he has created. "Briton is sold to the Governor of Spanish Cuba by the Caribbean Indians who have captured him. He is rescued by the Captain of an English ship who refuses to 'deliver up any *Englishman* under *English* Colours' (emphasis in the original) to the pursuing Spaniards from whom Briton has escaped" (Carretta 4). He describes his captivity as physical. He makes his escape from the Spaniards into the arms of "true" Englishmen. His escape is only physical like his captivity was only physical. He still returns to the entrapments of being a black man but representing the white man's agenda. For him, these two identities only merge within the narrative's voice.

#### The Intervention is not a Resolution

The resolution of this story shows a traditional biblical reference. It is about "Divine Goodness" and compares Hammon to David whom God "delivered out of the Paw of the Lion and out of the Paw of the Bear" (Hammon 14). This ending seems to transform Hammon into the normative white protagonist of the genre. The voice is uniform in the end because it is only about

the tradition. Hammon's actual plotline ended on the previous page when he reunites with his master. This traditional ending ends the struggle for Hammon, at least in the narrative. In this section, tradition is the political experience that is explored through double consciousness. The struggle of two consciousnesses in one voice is overpowered by tradition.

“The idea of tradition has a strange, mesmeric power in black political discourse...It operates as a means to assert the close kinship of cultural forms and practices generated from the irrepressible diversity of black experience” (Gilroy 187). This cultural form is not present in Hammon's text. It will never be present in Hammon's text. The black experience of Hammon's text is gleaned from his occupation as a sailor from the New England area and from the statement of his race in the beginning of this narrative. What does the end of this narrative offer? It offers tradition of a different kind, the tradition of Christianity as a cultural tool to invoke loyalty. “Divine Goodness...miraculously preserved” him through his times of trial and returned him to General Winslow. The audience may not be loyal to Hammon, but they will recognize that he is a Christian man or at least shown as one. The editors insert the final biblical reference as a matter of convention.

Fanon describes a similar journey home when he writes about island men in the Antilles returning from France after a long stay. They believe themselves to be different, and their peers perceive them differently. “The black man who has been to the *metropole* is a demigod...After a fairly long stay in the *metropole*, many Antilleans return home to be deified. The native islander who has never left his hole, the country bumpkin, adopts a most eloquent form of ambivalence toward them” (Fanon 3). Fanon describes the many ways in which someone leaves their home and travels to a metropolitan place. When they come back home they are changed. In his examples it is a transformation from who they are to something more refined—more white or

just more. The Puritans made this journey as well. They left their home, willingly and unwillingly, and when they came home, they were changed. They survived God's test and became part of an elite group, the captivity survivors. Did Briton Hammon return changed? I assume he did. But is he represented that way? No, he returns home with his master to the same situation in which he left. Fanon's point is not that the situation is different; it is the person who is changed. Perhaps Hammon changed, but the narrative is not about who is before and after, and the text does not speak to either. The narrative is written after his arrival in New England.

In the introduction to *The Souls of Black Folk*, "Du Bois's divided self was destined to cohere and merge, for in his special vision in which 'neither of the older selves [shall] be lost' the Negro self would comprehend its true essence even as the American self would become, in turn, more robust. It would become, in time—and struggle stronger for being doubled, not undermined—the sum of its parts, not the dividend" (xvii) The two separate parts of the double consciousness are in one body, but his dream is that it would become whole; something more than it was before. Briton Hammon did become something more than he was before, at least his narrative has become something more. A servant has become immortal in literary conversation, but is mostly separated from the identity and authority he should have. He is both separated from his race and analyzed as merely a narrator, or he is described as a black man with no authority. A captivity narrative, printed by publishers of almanacs, is discussed in context with all of the texts in the African Diaspora.

Using these specific conventions is part of the white influence, but Briton Hammon is implicated in their use as the author of the text. As the plot ends, the biggest shift in narration occurs. Fanon writes, "the more the black Antillean assimilates the French language, the whiter he gets—i.e. the closer he comes to becoming a true human being...A man who possesses a

language possesses as an indirect consequence the world expressed and implied by this language” (Fanon 2). The language used throughout the text is supposedly Hammon’s responsibility, even if the shift in narration is apparent. Fanon describes this further, “There is nothing more sensational than a black man speaking correctly, for he is appropriating the white world” (19).

The freedom in this is the end of one journey. He will not have freedom from his servitude to the text or to his master. He will not have freedom from white influence embedded in institutional structures of power—they are everywhere. Du Bois’s double consciousness is a concept that shows the struggle between the two ideals, it is not necessarily a solution to their merging together. “This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius. These powers of body and mind have in the past been strangely wasted, dispersed, or forgotten” (Du Bois 6). Hammon’s struggle is in the two parts of his voice that are not alike. In the context of his narrative, they do not merge into one strong consciousness. They remain in conflict while one has more power over the other.

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