

21L007 After Columbus

Topics for the third essay (five pages, due Monday, 11/17)

This essay can focus on Rowlandson, Jemison, or Smith. Whichever topic you choose (and I am open to other suggestions), I would like for you to focus on readings of particular passages in the text, rather than on generalizations about the text as a whole or about the larger historical situation. (These passages should be ones we did *not* discuss exhaustively in class). Why? Because the claims we make need to match the nature of the evidence at hand. Of course, to be really interesting, these claims *should* have some connection to larger issues. That connection goes two ways: 1/ "this passage is interesting to begin looking at because it allows me to think about the larger issue of X"; 2/ "having done a careful reading of this passage, I can now speculate about what it might imply in the larger framework of X issue or situation." In other words, I might be interested in Mary Jemison's characterization of Indian women's work, and after from there speculate about the nature of work in general, the different ways it was understood in white and Indian societies, and the consequences arising from these different understandings. (I might also find evidence for these speculations in her text and others we've read). But it *wouldn't* be convincing if I discussed one passage and then told you conclusively and in general that work was always different for Europeans and for Indians.

1. Smith and Rowlandson (like Léry) are taken from, and then returned to their own culture after a period of captivity and immersion in another culture. What does that process of removal and return mean to them? What tangible or intangible things do they bring back from this experience (understandings, abilities, goods)? What have they left behind? Would you assess their experience differently than they themselves do, at the end?

2. In 1781, a Delaware man named Captain Pipe, or Hopocan, asked the British, "who of us can believe, that you could love a People differing in Colour to that of Yours, more than those (of such) who have a *white* Skin like unto that of Yours!" Pipe suggests that color is the most important factor in group identities and allegiances. Does this seem to you to be the case in Rowlandson's and/or Jemison's narratives? To what extent, and where, does color (or, a visible, bodily sign of difference), mark the identities of groups in these texts? Where do other factors play a role in group identities? (For instance, religion; diet; dress; language; work; property; legal status; political allegiance; marriage and family relations). Where do you see the possibility of flexibility or movement in these identity-defining categories? When someone has moved across a defining line in some respect -- by religious conversion, by putting on moccasins or English clothes, by changing sides in negotiations or war -- how are such moves judged by the narrative voice of the text or by other characters in it?

3. "You gave me language": native speech and English editing. Caliban claims to speak through the language Prospero gave him, and in the terms that language allows. To give language is also to give certain conditions of speaking. To an important extent, Caliban's

situation echoes that of indigenous speakers in the first few centuries of European implantation in America. To be literate was largely to be literate in English and through an English education, and to produce a text was largely to produce it for an English-literate audience. The words of nonliterate speakers -- as in the case of Powhatan's speeches in Smith -- appear through the mediation of explorers, missionaries, and others who wrote these words down with varying degrees of fidelity. But these *are* the sources we have. The narrative of Mary Jemison – ethnically Anglo, culturally Seneca – comes to us in the same way through a set of mediations; transcribed from an oral account, it is also framed by an introduction, and heavily edited. The editor speaks in his own voice in the introduction; what do we know about his treatment of the subject and his intentions in producing the narrative? Find some specific places in the text where it is reasonable to suppose that Seaver (the editor) and Jemison may have had different perspectives and interests – where Seaver has clearly intervened. Can you distinguish their voices at all? Are there places where you would suppose Jemison's voice did not attract substantive changes from Seaver? **This might be a very difficult essay to do successfully**, because of its speculative nature; even if none of you tackle the topic, I wanted to suggest it at least to provoke thinking about the issues. These issues about mediation come up somewhat differently in the texts of Smith and Rowlandson; despite their biases, both are considered to be highly valuable primary sources on Native American history and cultures because of the information they contain.

4. You might also choose to focus a paper around one of the concepts emerging from earlier reading: education and “civilizing”; labor; warmaking; cross-cultural romance; you can think of others yourselves. See me for help framing the topic.