The *New York Magazine, or Literary Repository* (1790-1797) was one of the longest running American magazines of the 1700s and is commonly studied because of its status as a particularly influential periodical of the early republic. It was in print for 8 years and had almost 100 issues. It published accounts of theater performances and travel as well as current events and extracts of essays and creative works. The publisher was T. and J. Swords of New York, who published two other Christian journals around the same time and printed bound books as well. Thomas and James Swords, the printers and editors, were fairly well-known journalists. They drew on the work of the Friendly Club in many of this publication’s issues. The *New York Magazine*’s overall contents are eclectic and seem to claim a curatorship of the interests of the intellectual elite. However, the subscription list reveals a varied readership, about half of which were artisans and shopkeepers, though public figures like George Washington and John Adams are also included. The political leanings of the magazine may help explain the appeal to this specific readership.

*The History of Maria Kittle* wasfirst serialized in the *New York Magazine* from September 1790 to January 1791, with each update appearing monthly for a total of five installments. The magazine also published some of Bleecker’s other work, especially poetry; however, each piece was submitted by Bleecker’s daughter Margaretta V. Faugeres several years after her mother’s death. The magazine publishers, T. and J. Swords of New York, went on to publish the *Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker, in Prose and Verse* in bound form in 1793, which included *The History of Maria Kittle,* another unfinished historical novel called *The History of Henry and Ann*, a collection of poetry and letters, and some of Margaretta’s own literary work. Because of its immense popularity, *The History of Maria Kittle* was finally republished separately in its own volume in 1797 by Elisha Babcock of Hartford, Connecticut. There is very little difference between the text published in the magazine and stand-alone novel versions of the tale, beyond minor editorial revisions. Interestingly, a 19th century New York women’s magazine called *The Ladies’ Literary Cabinet, Being a Repository of Miscellaneous Literary Productions, both Original and Selected in Prose and Verse* (1819-1822) republished the novel in serial form beginning in 1821. It was common practice to republish work this way, and *The History of Maria Kittle* may have appeared in other periodicals as well.

*The History of Maria Kittle* is often described as the first captivity novel, because it utilizes the captivity narrative form without a solid basis on the actual experience of the author or the record of an amanuensis. This is ironic given the opening lines of the novel. There are claims that the novel is based on the actual experiences of Maria Kittle or Kittlehyun, whose family lived in the same region as the Bleeckers, and whose captivity narrative can be corroborated by an account with similar detail in another memoir. However, the text of the novel emphasizes several other themes independent of historical fidelity, leaving room for a more creative retelling. One of its major themes, conflict between native and colonial Americans, had major impact on the way other writers dealt with the issue. For example, Bleecker may have influenced Cooper’s approach to Native Americans in *The Last of the Mohicans*.

Bleecker’s noveladopts many of the literary tropes of her time, including the captivity narrative, epistolary structure, reliance on the power of sentiment, religious didacticism, elegiac verse, and the domestic manifestation of national politics. The plot reflects Maria Kittle’s capture by Native Americans at the time of the French and Indian War, the loss of most her family including her two young children to the violence of her abductors, their flight to Montreal where she is revived by a circle of sympathetic English and French women, and her eventual miraculous reunion with her husband. The treatment of the Native American characters is very stereotypical. She depicts them as untrustworthy, brutal savages who murder women and children. However, the combination of Maria Kittle’s account and Bleecker’s own life experience during the Revolutionary War leads to an overall meditation on loss in the novel, especially feminine, maternal loss, and the comfort of female fellowship. The displacement of the conflict Bleecker herself experienced onto Maria Kittle’s situation among her Indian neighbors leads to the foregrounding of women’s issues in the politics of early America and white women’s role in nation building. Her story examines the emotional trauma of collateral damage, especially as a woman effected by the conflicts of early America.

Though few scholars have analyzed Bleecker’s work at length, and those who have focus mainly on her pastoral poetry or the historical significance of her work and its politics, especially her treatment of Native Americans, very few if any critics have discussed the significance of the novel’s original and continued serialization. This leaves several intriguing questions unanswered. For example: What made this tale such a good fit for this magazine and its readership? Also, further research should be done on the way each installment can be read in isolation from the others, in context of the other work published in the magazine, and in relation to the layers of time it represents from its authorship in 1779 to its depiction of pre-revolution events and relevance to the conditions of the time of publication and republication. The novel is depicted here as it appeared in the *New York Magazine*, its first publication, in order to foster further answers to these questions.

As stated earlier, Bleecker’s biography is a significant aspect of most interpretations of her novel. She was born Anna Elizabeth Schuyler around October 1752 as the sixth child of Margareta Van Wyck and Brandt Schuyler, prosperous Dutch merchants and aristocrats of New York City. Her father Brandt Schuyler died shortly before she was born, and her mother married Anthony Ten Eyck in 1760. Their daughter Susanna is the addressee of Ann’s epistolary captivity novel *The History of Maria Kittle.* Ann married into another prominent Dutch family in 1769, becoming the wife of lawyer John James Bleecker, who encouraged her writing. They moved to Tomhanick, a more agricultural region near Albany, in 1771, which inspired much of Ann’s pastoral poetry. The Bleeckers had two daughters. The eldest, Margaretta, also became a writer and was responsible for publishing most of her mother’s work. The younger daughter Abella died of dysentery in 1777 during the Revolutionary War when the family was forced to flee their home in Tomhanick because the British General Burgoyne’s troops were invading the area from the North. Ann saw her mother die during the flight southward, and then her sister Caty Swits died on the return journey. Ann, her daughter Margaretta, and a mullato girl survived. John Bleecker was absent for the entire episode, fighting for the militia in support of the revolution.

At home again in 1779, Ann produced a periodical called the “Albany Gazette” filled with her own essays and poetry for her family and friends to read. This highlights the significance of the periodical genre to early Americans and to Bleecker specifically. However, much of her writing after so much personal loss, including the novel transcribed here, dealt with grief. Unfortunately, Ann’s husband, who continued in the militia, was captured in 1781, and Ann suffered a miscarriage and mental breakdown in shock. Her husband was rescued quickly, but she never completely regained her spirits and died November 23, 1783.

In *The History of Maria Kittle,* Bleeckerdeals specifically with mothers mourning the loss of their children and other family members in times of violence. However, by using the structure of a captivity narrative and the setting of the French and Indian War, the novel explores this theme while vilifying Native Americans rather than the British. This trend of scapegoating and demonizing Native Americans continued into the 19th century. Although, Bleecker herself did not live to see much peace in the newly formed United States, her words survived to comfort, entertain and challenge other citizens of the new nation. Though her novel and other work enjoyed enormous popularity in the early republic, it went out of fashion until more recent scholars went looking for alternative perspectives of American history and early examples of the American novel.

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