

Mother and the Other: Situating New Zealand Women's Captivity Narratives in a Transcolonial Settler Culture of Anxiety

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This article analyses nineteenth-century women's captivity narratives in the white settler colony New Zealand. It asks how white femininity and indigenous masculinity are represented and how these notions relate to representations of white masculinity and indigenous femininity. Moreover, the article examines the relationship between colonial gender identities and British bourgeois ideals of respectable gender images. By comparing the New Zealand case with the early modern North American narrative of Mary Rowlandson and the Australian Eliza Fraser stories, the author argues that New Zealand can be included in a transcolonial culture of captivity, as it shares a transcolonial repertoire of discursive rhetorics, strategies and anxieties.

When the weekly New Zealand newspaper *N.Z. Truth* in July 1929 published the story of a woman who had been reported missing for decades, it stood in a long transcolonial tradition of popular interest in captivity narratives:

Fifty four years ago, when the wheel of racial hatred between Maori and pakeha still was spinning, though slowly, a little girl of eight years was whisked away from her happy playgrounds in the bush-encircled homestead of her father and mother.

The Maoris who thus requited what they deemed just revenge for a pakeha wrong, made her one of themselves, and the little girl never saw her parents again. Her mother died with a broken heart.¹

More than a hundred years before, Samuel Marsden, an Anglican priest of the Church Missionary Society and probably the best known missionary in New Zealand and Australia, had expressed a widespread belief:

The character of the New Zealanders was considered even more barbarous than that of any other savage nation, so that few [missionaries] would venture out to a country where they could anticipate nothing less than to be killed and eaten by the natives.²

New Zealand in the early nineteenth century was considered a dangerous space inhabited by ferocious savages. Both quotes deal with themes of indigenous violence and captivity. These were themes that made visible the vulnerabilities of the British Empire in general and of the developing settler community in New Zealand in particular.

This article is situated in the field of gender and imperial studies and examines female captivity narratives from the nineteenth century New Zealand frontier between the 1830s and 1870s.³ I use the term 'captivity narratives' to describe both published and unpublished historical sources, usually written in the first person, that deal with the seizure of Europeans by non-Europeans in a colonial setting. Captivity narratives typically describe being captured by indigenous people, the captive's experiences, and eventually the end of captivity.⁴ I focus on sources written by and about women. Even if they are highly specific narratives, they are part of, as Linda Colley has noted, 'a much broader, miscellaneous and markedly persistent culture of captivity'.⁵

Compared to the vast amount of research on American and, increasingly, on Australian captivity narratives, there is a research gap on this topic in New Zealand. Indeed, Trevor Bentley's *Captured by Maori: White Female Captives, Sex and Racism on the Nineteenth-Century New Zealand Frontier* remains the only analysis of New Zealand women's captivity narratives.⁶ Hence, his contribution, though rather a work of popular historiography, has opened up a new

field of research in New Zealand history. Notwithstanding its merits, Bentley's analysis also shows several decisive weaknesses: although he presents neglected and partly unpublished historical sources displaying women at the centre of events, his work lacks a thorough theoretical and methodological foundation.

References to 'discourse' are ubiquitous in studies of cultural history. It is generally used in a variety of definitions, which are not always stated explicitly. 'Discourse' is here used to indicate practices that organise and define the perception and the action of individuals.⁷ Historical discourse analysis aims to expose discursive rules and discover discourses as well as their historical, spatial, cultural and social contexts by analysing certain corpora of historical sources (written, spoken or non-textual). As a result, this approach requires detailed attention to recurring discursive statements within the source material, in particular regarding themes like knowledge, constructions of meaning, and identity formation. What knowledge is necessary as a precondition? Which categorisations, causalities, and hierarchies are discernible? What knowledge is repressed, not admitted, or not considered? What conflicting statements can be seen in different sources? Who tries to position certain statements with which means? How do these themes change over time?⁸

If captivity is really an 'integral part of Britain's overseas experience', as Colley suggests, why is there a neglect of historical research on this topic in New Zealand?⁹ Indeed, compared to other regions the number of well-known captivity cases is rather insignificant. Nevertheless, the captivity discourse was publicly visible. The few cases of captivity generated a high public interest in the New Zealand and Australian presses. Moreover, European women's captivity in different geographical areas of the British world, however distant in time and space, cannot be easily separated, as they were connected by important imperial networks.¹⁰ Bentley's work on New Zealand women's captivity narratives neglects the question of how the source material is embedded in a wider colonial and transcolonial discourse. The first part of this essay looks at transcolonial discursive elements by focusing on two narratives from other settler colonial backgrounds in a comparative view: the early modern North American Mary Rowlandson narrative, and the nineteenth century Australian Eliza Fraser stories.¹¹

In the second part I will argue that New Zealand can be included in a transcolonial culture of captivity sharing a transcolonial repertoire of discursive rhetorics, strategies, and anxieties. I will address the following questions: what images of white femininity and indigenous masculinity are expressed in these narratives? How do they relate to images of white masculinity and indigenous femininity? What relationship do these gender identities have with British bourgeois ideals of respectable masculinity and femininity? My argument will expand on Colley's conclusion that captive bodies 'mark out the changing boundaries over time of Britain's imperial aggression, and the frontiers of its inhabitants' fears, insecurities, and deficiencies'.¹²

TRANSCOLONIAL DISCURSIVE TRADITIONS

The tradition of the Indian captivity narrative in North America is as old as British colonialism. The first narrative written by a woman was Mary Rowlandson's (1682).¹³ Born in 1637 in England, she was two years old when her family migrated to Massachusetts. In 1653 Rowlandson's family moved to the frontier settlement of Lancaster, Massachusetts, the location of her later capture. It was territorial expansion that eventually brought European newcomers and Native Americans into conflict.

As the earliest captivity narrative to become a bestseller in America, Colley argues, Mary Rowlandson's text decisively influenced future readers' expectations of how captivity writers were expected to narrate their stories.¹⁴ Starting a transcolonial tradition of female captivity narratives, these texts were read for much more than just their informational value; as Colley asserts, they 'focused attention on and prompted discussion about much broader constraints, embarrassments and fears'.¹⁵ Metacom's War, part of the historical background of Rowlandson's narrative, and the ongoing struggle between British settlers and local Indians, created the need for a textual form that 'helped the European culture struggle through questions of cultural and gender identity during periods of extreme change and uncertainty'.¹⁶ In a wider sense, Rowlandson's text offered a moral justification for the European side in this conflict, contrasting European civilisation against the perceived barbarity of Indians.

The second example considered here, a set of related stories about the shipwreck of the *Stirling Castle* in 1836, is located in Australia. While the main protagonist, Eliza Fraser, developed into a source of legend and myth in Australian history, the factual basis of the narrated events, according to Kay Schaffer, is less decisive than the representation of Eliza Fraser and her captivity story in various discourses and fantasies circulating in different colonial and metropolitan settings.¹⁷ These depictions – textual, historiographical, biographical, literary, and visual – produced, sustained, challenged, promoted, and helped regulating various representations of difference, such as class, 'race' and gender.¹⁸ Moreover, when Eliza Fraser eventually returned to England, her captivity story travelled with her. It did so in further dramatised ways, as the Eliza Fraser stories became more dramatic with each retelling.

These narratives were not limited to the Australian colonies and metropolitan England, however, but quickly spread to other regions in colonial magazines, broadsheets, and, as early as 1837, in the form of an American captivity narrative.¹⁹ This textual translation into a classic captivity narrative was set in an environment that rather resembled the American context, including feathered heads and wigwams. According to Kay Schaffer and D'Arcy Randall, it was accompanied by 'transglobal conversations' with other captivity narratives like Rachel Plummer's and Cynthia Ann Parker's, as demonstrated by a noticeable synchronicity, a shared cultural production, and even identical illustrations.²⁰

These textual translations of the Eliza Fraser story serve as an example for the way captivity narratives as discursive strategies were used across time and colonial locations as instruments which helped to come to terms with unstable cultural and gender identities in situations of change.²¹ The 1830s were a decade of significant shifts in the British Isles, with respect to an emerging British Victorian identity and a developing middle-class consciousness.²² Questions of gender roles and national identity, as they were played out in distant locations, became especially significant. In a comparative view, the Eliza Fraser stories are particularly important because they resulted in a wider and more enduring public interest in the colonial and British presses than other contemporary captivity narratives.²³ According to Schaffer, the several stories share similar elements,

while constituting different narratives. These circulated in different forms and were read for various reasons by a varied audience.²⁴ Schaffer argues that, unlike their reception in the British Isles, the colonial Australian interest was particularly determined by intercultural contact in an emerging white settler/invasor colony. This was, therefore, a concern with a 'liminal narrative of first contact', which 'fed the fears of an insecure settler population'. As opposed to this, the attraction in Britain was rather popular, political, and scientific.²⁵ Thus, this captivity narrative both fed actual fears and fulfilled a popular desire for narratives of intercultural contact.²⁶

Both Eliza Fraser and Mary Rowlandson are represented (or represent themselves) as mothers who had to face the loss of a child or a temporary separation from her. They were not able to protect their children, what their role as mothers demanded. Furthermore, a second loss which both had to face was the death, or the prolonged absence, of their husbands. Hence, they were deprived of one possible source of protection in situations of intercultural conflict. This situation might have further enhanced in the readers the interest in themes of sexuality and sexual abuse of European women by indigenous men. Although most clearly visible only in narratives and relating illustrations of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, 'captivities confront their readers with real or potential sexual relationships across racial and cultural lines'.²⁷ In Rowlandson's case this point was confined to the readers' imagination. Similarly, the American captivity narrative about Eliza Fraser left deliberately open the possibility of sexual abuse; the readers could only speculate.

Although the distinction between Self and Other is obvious in both cases, the representations of the local population differ significantly. As a permanent settler, Mary Rowlandson was to a certain extent familiar with the language and customs of the Indians. She was therefore able to communicate with her captors. Nevertheless, her background would have not allowed her to openly express sympathy for them. Subconsciously, however, she tentatively began to identify with the indigenous society, as the description of Indian food indicates. While she would probably have despised eating raw horse liver and cooked horse feet in her settler community, she found it savoury as a captive. As a contrast to this rather ambivalent

portrayal, the 1830s stories about the presumed captivity of Eliza Fraser remain one-sided, and the Badtjala Aborigines are silenced and racialised.

Finally, while Mary Rowlandson can be characterised as a survivor character, she shows both traits of a victim and a victor, Eliza Fraser lacks Rowlandson's physical and mental strength, as well as her ability and will to adapt to life in the indigenous community in order to survive.²⁸ Eliza Fraser can be characterised as a 'frail flower' or a 'damsel in distress', a woman facing the threat of a villain or monster, who is in desperate need of a male rescuer. This type of woman captive character was, according to June Namias, most typical for nineteenth century women's captivity narratives.²⁹ And yet, even if these narratives should be analysed within their specific historical contexts, I suggest that certain elements of the discursive terrain of female captivity were persistent in the British world over time and space.

REPRESENTATION OF PAKEHA WOMEN'S CAPTIVITY IN NEW ZEALAND

1. REPRESENTING MAORI THROUGH CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES

Settler handbooks are important sources in the transcolonial analysis of settler discourse.³⁰ A recurring theme they approached was the 'ranking' of indigenous people according to their 'racial' classifications. In this racialised view, what distinguishes Maori from other non-European populations was the treatment of women. According to a popular work by Joel Samuel Polack, the

superior civilization of the New Zealanders compared to the Australians [...] arises from the different treatment of their females, and history has invariably taught us the assertion, that absolutely the rise, progress, and decline of nations, has depended principally on the treatment of the weaker sex.³¹

Rather positive statements about Maori, however, are usually found near others which put them into perspective. The effect of these

recurring discursive representations on intending emigrants must have been twofold: Maori are not as 'civilised' as Europeans, yet not as 'barbarous' as other 'savage races'. Measuring a society's treatment of women as a criterion for determining its degree of civilisation was especially helpful in creating a moral justification for the superiority of civilised British colonialism. This discursive refrain, as Philippa Levine has noted, 'assumed that a critical function of society was to care for and protect women, an idea which logically ensured that women be defined by men and compared against male behaviour'.³² The supposed treatment of women was thus also used in arguments about conflict against Maori in more conventional terms.³³ With reference to a well-known comment about Russia attributed to Napoleon one settler guide warned that 'with equal justice it might be said, if you "scratch the Maori you find the savage"'.³⁴

A key discursive element in these representations is the construction of difference between the Self and the Other. Originally applied to the study of European relations with the Middle East, Edward Said's argument about the Western representation of the Orient can also be transferred to the New Zealand context.³⁵ Said describes Orientalism as a discourse that constructs the Orient as the West's imagined Other – something that is constructed by the West through a system of knowledge production, exists for the West, and helps to shape its own identity. Some commentators, Lieutenant-Colonel Godfrey Mundy on his visit to New Zealand in 1847-48, for example, even established a direct link between the Maori and 'the Oriental': 'There appears to me a good deal of Orientalism in the character of the Maori'.³⁶ In the middle of the nineteenth century the discourse of Orientalism was common sense: 'One could speak in Europe of an Oriental personality, an Oriental atmosphere, an Oriental tale, Oriental despotism, or an Oriental mode of production, and be understood'.³⁷ How naturalised or in other words self-evident was this discursive strategy in a recently acquired colony like New Zealand?

Part of this system of representation, the captivity discourse allowed the British to make sense of a specific colonial setting. The captivity discourse is characterised by the elements of violence, cannibalism, and slavery as primary elements of Othering as a

discursive strategy. Maori violence and brutality were constructed as a binary opposition to the peaceful intentions of defenceless British settlers, as news about the captivity of Elizabeth (called Betty) Guard on the coast of Taranaki show. It was reported that '[e]very new arrival brings intelligence of the committal of fresh atrocities by the Natives of that country upon the defenceless Settlers and Traders'.³⁸ Nouns like 'atrocities' were a set element of the captivity discourse. Alternatives in synonymous usage were 'horrid murder', 'outrages', 'massacre', 'barbarities', 'cruelty', 'slaughter' or 'murderous attack'.³⁹

If violent attacks on male settlers or castaways were not enough to convince the readers of the 'savagery' of the 'Natives', violence towards European women, or - even worse - mothers and their young children, would have surely fulfilled the purpose. Betty Guard, twenty years old at the time of the event in 1834, was, according to an article from the *Sydney Herald*, miraculously saved by her hair comb:

During the skirmish Mrs. Guard was twice knocked down by the savages, with a child at her breast, and but for her comb would have been instantly killed; she was however taken prisoner by the monsters in our retreat with her two babies.⁴⁰

This statement is part of Betty Guard's husband's, Captain Jacky Guard's, observation reported to the Sydney paper. Stressing the suffering of his entire family helped him ensure that a considerable rescue party was dispatched to the West coast of the North Island. It also guaranteed the generosity of the Sydney public – a strategy which Eliza Fraser may have learned from this prior incident. European womanhood and motherhood, besides cargo, land and security, were elements that sparked European protection and rescue efforts.

Violence, a crucial 'savage' characteristic constantly stressed by European sources, was not considered a response to European invasion. It was rather seen as an endemic, traditional element of Maori culture, a trait inscribed into their way of living.⁴¹ An article

from the *Sydney Gazette* and *New South Wales Advertiser* from November 1834, reporting the captivity of Betty Guard, tells readers about the 'exceeding ferocity of the New Zealand savage, and that inherent treachery and rapacity which has distinguished them from the horrible slaughtering of the ill fated crew and passengers of the Boyd to the present period'.⁴²

Description of violence in the published sources, however, often went beyond. Descriptions like the following *Sydney Herald* article from November 1834, regardless of its veracity, further increased settler bias against the Maori 'Other': 'Mrs Guard states, that [...] [t]hey [her Maori captors] voraciously licked her blood, and when it ceased to flow, attempted to make an incision in her throat for that purpose, with part of an iron hoop'.⁴³ The image of the cold-blooded and blood-thirsty Maori, reported in indirect speech by the woman captive herself, vividly illustrates the process of Othering. While the exhausted state of the captive alone must have ensured the readers' sympathy, the Maori Other does not seem to care at all. In contrast, the behaviour of the locals is portrayed as animal-like, using the image of the 'wild beast' – a common strategy of dehumanising captors in captivity narratives.⁴⁴ Both in newspaper articles and in other published works, however, opposing voices can be found. Indeed, this discourse was not uncontested, and the colonisation of New Zealand proceeded in the context of increasing and genuine concerns for the wellbeing of the indigenous population. However, in the white settler colonies, these objections could only remain a minority.

A second dominant element of Othering can be found in the depiction of cannibalism, a classic trope in travel writing and fiction about the Pacific. Representations of cannibalism, however, often reveal more about their authors than about their subjects. According to Barbara Creed and Jeanette Hoorn, 'Europeans constructed – consciously or otherwise – the myth of the "cannibal" through journals, literature and other forms of story-telling in order to denote indigenous people as primitive savages'.⁴⁵ In the discourse on women's captivity in New Zealand cannibalism was prominent in the sources published in the 1830s and early 1840s. Afterwards, it quickly diminished. For instance, the 1859 edition of the *New*

Zealand Handbook already lists cannibalism as an extinct custom of Maori New Zealanders.⁴⁶

Descriptions of cannibalism were brief, but frequent, as in the journal of Lieutenant Henry Gunton, a day-by-day account of the expedition to rescue the Taranaki captives in 1834. Gunton notes: 'the savages killed twelve of the crew, put them into their ovens, roasted and ate them'.⁴⁷ The offering of human flesh to the captives, which they believed to be the bodies of their relatives or fellow seamen, was considered even worse than the descriptions of cannibalism, these sources insisted. Cannibalism, like the love of war and violence, was considered a natural characteristic of the Maori. In the early period of European settlement, the myth of cannibalism in the captivity discourse was ubiquitous. Increasing systematic colonisation, however, and increasing intercultural contact, rendered this theme less frequent. Given that most captivity sources leave the indigenous population silent, occasions in which the Maori are actually given a distinct voice are particularly interesting. Captain Guard's account of the encounter with Taranaki Maori contains scenes which are presented as conversations; for example, when the Maori 'with the most abominable threats and gestures, said they would "eat our hearts!" &c'.⁴⁸ Passages of indirect or direct Maori speech were reserved for cannibalistic threats in order to render the scenes even more intimidating and dramatised.

Similarly to the Eliza Fraser story in the Australian context two years later, the captivity narrative of Betty Guard travelled to England, even though the metropolitan interest did not seem to have been as high. An 1835 article in *The Times* mainly consists of copied parts of a *Sydney Herald* article from November 1834. The heading focuses on 'Cannibals', and the article focuses on the 'sufferings' of Betty Guard and her children.⁴⁹ What was less interesting to the reading public was filtered out. Interestingly, the short introduction to Mrs. Guard's narrative notes that as the 'islanders were cannibals', her 'escape may be better imagined than described'.⁵⁰ Cannibalism remained a well-known topic of stories set in the Pacific region and a crucial element in the captivity discourse of the 1830s.

Captivity in the eyes of the European observer was linked to slavery. This theme was no longer connected to European history due to the abolitionist political climate in Britain, but confined to the

'uncivilised' world. Slavery was presented as a practice completely detrimental to Britishness, and was therefore another key form of 'Othering'. In his 1838 travel narrative Joel Polack treated the situation of a Maori 'slave or taurekareka' in the same chapter dealing with the treatment of European captives. The existence of enslaved Europeans threatened the idea of a superior European civilisation. 'Liberty' was one crucial ideological tenet of a British 'empire of rights', and the possibility that Britons could be taken captive and forced into slavery was bound to raise attention. When two young women became victims of a 'forcible abduction' in Wangaroa in 1866, a European ship Captain (with the help of a Maori chief and a ransom) 'rescued the poor girls from the horrible fate in store for them' – a life as enslaved captives.⁵¹ Slavery, cannibalism and violence were thus the most effective and most frequently used elements of a discursive Othering. As opposed to these characteristics, British settlers were generally represented in terms of peacefulness and superior civilisation, and without the means of defending themselves against Maori 'atrocities'.

2. REPRESENTING GENDER THROUGH CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES

According to Angela Woollacott, captivity narratives and narratives of colonial sexual assault 'contributed to the emergent nineteenth century European bourgeois definitions of respectable masculinity that emphasized reason, self-control and protective behaviour towards bourgeois women'.⁵² Moreover, 'they helped shape European bourgeois definitions of respectable femininity as delicate and vulnerable'.⁵³ How far does this assertion hold true for women's captivity in New Zealand?

Catherine Hall and Eleonore Davidoff initiated a debate about the gender ideologies of the British middle-class, which is most often remembered for the emphasis on the notion of separate spheres.⁵⁴ The Victorian domestic ideology of the middle-class constructed a clear division between a public sphere, reserved for men, and a private sphere, the domain of women. This separation was perceived as common-sense at the time.⁵⁵ Bourgeois women were thus urged to concentrate their social activities around home and family. This definition, as Hall argues, was already well established by the 1830s and 1840s.⁵⁶ Despite the ideological power of the notion of separate

spheres, this dichotomy has always been challenged, the authors assert, by women who felt restricted in their social life.⁵⁷ How did this dominant gender ideology, as a construction with specific meanings, translate into colonial contexts? Research on gender and empire has shown that these gender prescriptions circulated extensively.⁵⁸ Respectable femininity in the colonies was similarly characterised by 'women's confinement to a notional private sphere and their supposed incapacity for productive labour, education, professional work or political citizenship', though this was not uncontested.⁵⁹

In New Zealand, as in other white settler colonies, there is a noticeable gender imbalance in the first generation of European immigrants.⁶⁰ Before the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, New Zealand was not even considered a suitable place for European women at all. Levine notes how peopling 'such colonies with greater numbers of women became a desirable social policy intended to domesticate, to Anglicize, and to mollify some of the excesses of masculine societies at the frontier'.⁶¹ 'Making a new home' was thus the main purpose for women in white settler colonies, linking female migration closely to ideas of domesticity and also respectability. 'New Zealand with its reputed openings for aspiring farmers', James Hammerton argues, 'remained a convenient literary escape route to sturdy manhood and domesticated womanhood'.⁶² The ideology of a woman as the colonial 'helpmeet', as Raewyn Dalziel has shown for nineteenth century New Zealand, required that pakeha women, as their husbands returned from 'the sordid outside world', 'maintain a pure and gracious atmosphere, an unruffled serenity and strong moral purpose'.⁶³

One major function of captivity narratives in New Zealand was to 'excite pity and indignation in the breast of every man of moral principles in the community', as the *Daily Southern Cross* describes it.⁶⁴ The frequent use of nouns like 'sufferings' or 'hardships', or of adjectives like 'poor' or 'unfortunate', highlights the supposed vulnerability of captives in general, and of female captives in particular. Most captivity sources reinforce this observation: only a minority of them are written in a first-person perspective, which theoretically would have allowed former captive women to express their own agency. Instead, most captivity incidents are accounts

mediated by male authors. As it subjects women's voices to male authorities, this discursive technique shares certain characteristics with the silencing of indigenous voices.

Accordingly, female captives, both during their captivity as well as in descriptions of their rescue, are generally described as passive objects in contrast to male agency. They rarely act, but are acted upon. They show strength of heart and courage, and, of course, a desire to be taken back to European civilisation. Most of the captives are described in terms of their motherhood, which is another link to a transcolonial anxiety. Separation from one's child (besides being subject to *whakataurekareka*, acts of intimidation and degradation, and sometimes violence) was another pitiful element of representation of their captivity. On the other hand, vulnerable femininity required heroic male rescue, and a demonstration of European power and masculinity, and these further sustained ideologies of gender division.

There always was the possibility that captive women did not want to be taken back to European society. How was their resistance rationalised? Incidents of this kind, which are often described as 'going native', did not occur as frequently as with male New Zealanders and were presumably even less often recorded.⁶⁵ The example of Mary Bell, who was taken captive and lived as a *taurekaraka*, a cook slave, with a Maori community on Mana Island near Wellington for several years, shows how desires of going (and staying) native could be explained away within the captivity discourse. Settler John Anthony Knocks reports about her fate in his reminiscences:

Mr. Bell and lady took to excessive drinking which ultimately killed him and destroyed his wife, who became helplessly beridden [...] when she resisted all Mr. Murphy's offers of kindness to have conveyed to her friends or relations, or to place her amongst Europeans – saying No – she had become and felt so degraded she could not bear to be brought into union with Europeans again – she was therefore left.⁶⁶

Excessive alcohol consumption and feelings of degradation as a result of the prolonged state of slavery were used as an explanation for Mary Bell's reluctance to be brought back to a European community. According to this representation, captivity had transformed the woman and this change was now irreversible. This type of rationalisation allowed a specific discourse to survive together with the notion of European cultural superiority.

How were changes to the captives, women who had been 'exposed to the mercy of these ferocious savages, and carried away into such a wild country, far from human interventions', sketched in the discourse?⁶⁷ In representations of female captivity the description of the 'rescued' is often as, or even more, detailed than descriptions of captivity itself. In the case of Betty Guard, for example, the main emphasis in describing her was put on her Maori clothes, as the assistant surgeon William Barrett Marshall's *Personal Narrative of Two Visits to New Zealand* shows:

She was dressed in native costume, being completely enveloped from head to foot in two superb mats, the largest and finest of the kind I have ever seen [...] She was, however, barefooted, and awakened, very naturally, universal sympathy by her appearance.⁶⁸

Marshall, a humanitarian Philanthropist, describes her in sympathetic terms while noticing a change in her outward expression – she was dressed in traditional Maori clothing and appeared barefooted. Other commentators, Edward Markham, or Lieutenant Henry Gunton, for example, directed their attention more on the beauty of the rescued captive, describing her as 'dressed rather oddly [...] her hair long and black [...] and rather good looking' or 'looking beautiful in the Native Cacahow and Hair loose'.⁶⁹ In their descriptions one can sense the effects of living with Maori communities: Mrs. Guard's hair flowed freely, and above all, as Markham observes, there was 'a Wild look about her'.⁷⁰ These descriptions, while principally sympathetic, display a certain kind of exoticism and interest in what I would call the stain of wilderness.

This discursive technique presents the changes a captive could possibly undergo – change in dress, change in manners, being tattooed – as a perceived menace to prevailing ideas of masculinity and femininity. One thing was sure: life as a Maori captive was not what contemporary readers understood by 'respectable' femininity. These New Zealand captivities threatened images of delicate, decent, and caring domestic wives.

On the one hand, representations of pakeha women's captivity between the 1830s and the 1870s are structurally similar to their Australian counterparts (even though they did not find the metropolitan media market that the Eliza Fraser stories found). On the other, it is important that according to the New Zealand captivity discourse, in particular during the wars of the 1860s, mixed-descent women or Maori women legally married to respectable Europeans settlers were actually included in the definition of respectable femininity.⁷¹ Their captivity was treated in much the same way as the captivity of European women, even though their descent or family status needed to be made clear. Important to the settler population was, therefore, not only the captivity of European women and European children, but rather the captivity of all 'the wives and children of European settlers'.⁷² As can be expected, these husbands included their Maori wives and mixed race children into their anxieties regarding prescribed gender roles. That their anxieties could be widely represented in the New Zealand press sets New Zealand apart from the other white settler colonies.

The abduction of Caroline Perrett, also called Queenie, as a young girl by a group of Maori gum-diggers in 1874, is a good example of the limits of the New Zealand captivity discourse in the period of examination. The contemporary press reports covered the unsuccessful search activities, mentioned the reward for the restoration of the little girl, and reported the mother's suspicion that 'the natives have got her in the bush inland'.⁷³ Caroline Perrett's 'rediscovery' in July 1929 (she was then named Mrs. Ngoungou) was intensively reported in the New Zealand press, although not always in an accurate way, as Perrett clarifies in an exclusive interview with the Auckland paper, *The Sun*.⁷⁴ I have included Caroline Perrett's captivity in this analysis because it indicates what could not be written about 50 years before or earlier. Cases of complete

transculturation were not allowed in the public domain between the 1830s and 1870s. The historical circumstances and prevailing gender ideologies suppressed this crossing of boundaries. The expression 'I do not know if I would have been any happier living as a European', would have not been possible.⁷⁵ Namias' argument that captivity narratives in North America fulfilled the purpose of helping the European American settler population struggling 'through questions of culture and gender identity during periods of extreme change and uncertainty', can be applied to the New Zealand context as well.⁷⁶

While the representation of Maori violence in the captivity discourse can clearly be related to indigenous masculinity, female members of the Maori community are rarely visible in the discourse, except as a sexual attraction distracting Betty Guard's rescuers. In her case, it is reported that 'a number of women added enticement to those invitations, by dances of the most unequivocal character'.⁷⁷ In one instance, however, Maori women contribute to a discursive statement, which positions them in a more favourable light than their male relations. This can be observed in the captivity narrative of Maria Bennett, in which the help of a Maori slave woman saves the European captive.⁷⁸

In the report of the *Sydney Herald* about the rescue of Betty Guard, the captive is quoted in indirect speech, telling the readers about her first rescuer - a Maori woman and wife:

Mrs Guard states [...] They then stripped her and her children naked, dragged her to their huts, and would have killed her, had not a Chief's wife kindly interfered in her behalf, and when the bludgeon was raised with that intention, threw a rug over her person, and saved her life.⁷⁹

Betty was saved by the initiative of a Maori woman. Interestingly, according to a Maori historian, it was not the interference of a chief's wife, but the initiative of one of the Chiefs, Oaoiti, which saved her life.⁸⁰ How can one explain this difference?

It seems to me that Betty's version was more in accordance with the rules of the discourse. Firstly, the kind interference of a Maori man would have undermined the prevailing description of Maori as violent, 'ferocious savages', which had clear masculine connotations. Secondly, it was common ethnographic knowledge at the time that women captured in battle could be taken as wives by their captor. This would have further undermined male European authority, and contested pakeha gender roles.⁸¹ Betty's description, independently of its historical veracity, fulfilled European readers' expectations, sustaining their curiosity, their attention and confirming stereotypical images pertaining to gender roles.

It is no wonder that references to the marriage of a pakeha female captive to a Maori chief and sometimes to the resulting offspring are characterised by their brevity. In Maria Bennett's narrative, for instance, only one short sentence is required to spark the imagination of the readership: 'I was married to a chief, whose name was Orleu, by whom I had one child'.⁸² This textual reticence was not untypical for nineteenth century sexual discourse, as Dalley shows, where 'sex, like danger, was everywhere'.⁸³ Bennett's statement condenses the forced marriage of the European captive to the Maori chief, sexual activities, the captive's pregnancy, the motherhood of a Pakeha woman in a non-European environment, and, above all, the violation of racial boundaries and female vulnerability. Its shortness demonstrates how this remained a very painful topic in the context of a colonial sensitivity.

In relation to Betty Guard, *The Sydney Herald* reports that, after initial acts of *whakataurekareka*, the Maori 'did not afterward ill-use her'.⁸⁴ That she became pregnant some time after her return to Sydney generated some discussion about the origin of the pregnancy.⁸⁵ Who was the father? A glimpse into these concerns can be found in the autobiographical work of Edward Markham. The author, in contrast to Betty's own statement, reports that a 'Chief threw his Cahow over her and she became his Mistress'.⁸⁶ Markham questioned Betty's respectability: 'before I left Sydney,' he writes, 'I heard that she was brought to bed of Twins & they were rather dark'.⁸⁷ These stains of wilderness might have also influenced others. Travel author John Shaw, for example, described her as a 'drunken, degraded, and most miserably fallen woman' and as a

'female tigress'.⁸⁸ Failure to fulfil gender expectations of respectable European femininity was not easily forgotten.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have aimed to address a research gap in New Zealand historiography and the comparative study of settler-indigenous relations: European women's captivity narratives. Experiences of settler female captivity were less common in New Zealand than in North America and were less often published in the form of the classical American captivity narrative. Moreover, transcolonial interest in New Zealand captivity stories was significantly less intense than in the case of the Australian Eliza Fraser stories. Nevertheless, captivity as a transcultural encounter was constantly present in the colony's discourse on settler-Maori relations from the 1830s to the 1870s. This analysis of the captivity discourse has touched on closely interrelated notions of gender, ethnicity, and the construction of British imperial identities. In turn, the circulation of captivity narratives helped these discursive constructions. As a result, New Zealand women's captivity narratives addressed concerns about wider anxieties, vulnerabilities, and fears both in the metropolitan centres and in the settler peripheries. Moreover, they functioned as textual vehicles for constructing settler cultural and gender identity in times of severe change and uncertainty.

Together with other white settler colonies, New Zealand can be included in a transcolonial culture of captivity as it shares certain discursive themes and strategies. And yet, while New Zealand captivity narratives shared important elements with captivity narratives produced in other settler contexts, crucial differences can be found in the fact that in the New Zealand captivity discourse mixed-descent women or Maori women legally married to respectable Europeans settlers were included in the definition of respectable femininity, and in the fact that in New Zealand captivity narratives the possibility of sexual intercourse between white woman and indigenous man was treated slightly more openly than elsewhere.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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NOTES

¹ 'Lost white woman, kidnapped 50 years ago, found as wife of Maori', *N.Z. Truth* (18 July 1929), p. 7.

² Samuel Marsden, 'Observations on the Introduction of the Gospel into the South Sea Islands: Being my first visit to New Zealand in December, 1814', in John Rawson Elder (ed.), *The Journals and Letters of Samuel Marsden: 1765 - 1838* (Dunedin: Coulls Sommerville Wilkie, 1932), p. 61.

³ I use the term 'frontier' in accordance with June Namias, who acknowledges the ethnocentric deficiencies of the term. She uses it as a signifier for a group of European American-Indian contact zones. See June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1993).

⁴ See Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600 - 1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002), p. 13, and Linda Colley, 'Going Native, Telling Tales: Captivity, Collaborations and Empire', *Past and Present* 168 (2000), pp. 173-76.

⁵ Colley, 'Going Native, Telling Tales', p. 174.

⁶ Trevor Bentley, *Captured by Maori: White Female Captives, Sex and Racism on the Nineteenth-century New Zealand Frontier* (Auckland: Penguin, 2004).

⁷ See Achim Landwehr, *Historische Diskursanalyse* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2008), pp. 21-22.

⁸ See Landwehr, *Historische Diskursanalyse*, pp. 126-9.

⁹ Colley, *Captives*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰ See James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009); and Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001).

¹¹ Mary Rowlandson, *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, in Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola (ed.), *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives* (New York: Penguin, 1998), pp. 1-51; and Kay Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact: The Eliza Fraser Stories* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995).

¹² Colley, *Captives*, p. 12.

¹³ For the first American version, see Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, Together with the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed: Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson and Related Documents* (Boston: Bedford, 1997). I have relied on the first London publication of Rowlandson's narrative: Rowlandson, *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*.

¹⁴ See Colley, *Captives*, p. 150.

¹⁵ Colley, *Captives*, p. 141.

¹⁶ Namias, *White Captives*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁷ See Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact*, pp. 1-2; and Kay Schaffer, 'Colonizing Gender in Colonial Australia: The Eliza Fraser Story', in Gregory Castle (ed.), *Postcolonial Discourses: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 358.

¹⁸ These representations include for instance John Curtis' 1838 reconstruction in *The Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, Michael Alexander's 1976 popular history *Mrs Fraser on the Fatal Shore*, Sidney Nolan's Eliza Fraser series of paintings (1947-48), Patrick White's 1976 novel, *A Fringe of Leaves*, and composer Peter Sculthorpe's 1978 musical work, *Eliza Fraser Sings*. See Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact*, p. 3.

¹⁹ *Narrative of the Sufferings and Miraculous Escape of Mrs. Eliza Fraser* (New York, 1837).

²⁰ Kay Schaffer and D'Arcy Randall, 'Transglobal Translations: The Eliza Fraser and Rachel Plummer Captivity Narratives', in Graeme Harper (ed.), *Colonial and Postcolonial Incarceration* (London: Continuum, 2001), p. 105.

²¹ Namias, *White Captives*, pp. 10-1.

²² Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact*, p. 21.

²³ Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact*, p. 44.

²⁴ Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact*, p. 31.

²⁵ Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact*, pp. 24, 79.

²⁶ Colley, *Captives*, p. 12.

²⁷ Namias, *White Captives*, p. 85.

²⁸ Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier suggest five dominant images of women captives in the history of captivity narratives: as victims, as victors, as part of a female network of mothers, daughters and sisters, as emotionally traumatised, and finally as transculturalised. See Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative* (New York: Twayne, 1993), pp. 118-66.

²⁹ See Namias, *White Captives*, pp. 24, 29.

³⁰ Settler guides or handbooks, directed primarily at future immigrants, widely available, and sold for a comparably low price, form one important source of knowledge about New Zealand. Most of these guides included at least parts, if not a whole chapter, on 'the natives' - the most common term for the Maori population of New Zealand at the time. Their enduring popularity can be seen in the existence of various reprints. See for example *The New Zealand Handbook, or, Emigrants' Bradshaw: A Complete Guide to the 'Britain of the South'*, 3rd ed. (London: Edward Stanford, 1859).

³¹ Joel Polack, *Manners and Customs of the New Zealanders: with notes corroborative of their habits, usages, etc., and remarks to intending emigrants, with numerous cuts drawn on wood* (London: J. Madden, 1840), pp. 131-32. During his first stay in the colony, Polack was himself on very favourable terms with the Bay of Island Maori, being able to speak Maori, buying land, and successfully trading with them. He is even reported to have lived together with a Maori woman. See also George Lillie Craik, *The New Zealanders* (London: Knight, 1830), pp. 286-388.

³² Philippa Levine, 'Introduction: Why Gender and Empire?', in Philippa Levine (ed.), *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004), p. 6.

³³ 'The Hau Hau's poean', *Auckland Punch* 1 (14 November, 1868 - 8 May, 1869), p. 98.

³⁴ *The New Zealand Handbook, or, Guide to the 'Britain of the South'*, p. 21.

³⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin 1978).

³⁶ G. C., Mundy, 'Our Antipodes', in Lydia Wevers (ed.), *Travelling to New Zealand: An Oxford Anthology* (Auckland: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), p. 44.

³⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 31-2.

³⁸ 'New Zealand', *The Sydney Herald* (21 August, 1834), p. 2.

³⁹ See Craik, *The New Zealanders*, pp. 71-2; 'New Zealand', *The Sydney Herald* (21 August, 1834), p. 2; 'Massacre of the Natives in New Zealand', *The Hobart Town*

Courier (12 December, 1834), p. 2; *The Sydney Herald* (8 December, 1834), p. 4; *The Saturday Magazine* 353 Supplement (December 1837), pp. 258–64; *The Wellington Independent* (23 September, 1869), p. 3; 'Supreme Court', *The Evening Post* (28 September, 1869), p. 2; 'Supreme Court: Criminal Sittings', *The Wellington Independent* (28 September, 1869), p. 3; Maria Bennett, *A Narrative of the Suffering of Maria Bennett* (Dublin, 1846), Alexander Turnbull Library, Pam 1846 BEN 152; 'Poverty Bay massacre', *Auckland Punch* 1 (14 November, 1868 - 8 May, 1869), p. 28.

⁴⁰ 'New Zealand', *The Sydney Herald* (21 August, 1834), p. 2.

⁴¹ *The New Zealand handbook, or, Guide to the 'Britain of the South'*, p. 21.

⁴² 'Expedition to New Zealand', *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* (13 November, 1834), p. 2.

⁴³ 'New Zealand', *The Sydney Herald* (17 November, 1834), p. 2.

⁴⁴ Maria Bennett, *A Narrative of the Suffering of Maria Bennett*.

⁴⁵ Barbara Creed, Jeanette Hoorn (eds), *Body Trade: Captivity, Cannibalism and Colonialism in the Pacific* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. xviii.

⁴⁶ *The New Zealand Handbook, or, Emigrants' Bradshaw*, p. 11.

⁴⁷ Henry Gunton, *Diary of an expedition to New Zealand, 30 August 1834 - 30 November 1834*, Alexander Turnbull Library, MS-Papers-0960.

⁴⁸ 'New Zealand', *The Sydney Herald* (21 August, 1834), p. 2.

⁴⁹ 'Cannibals', *The Times* (11 May, 1835), p. 4. See 'New Zealand', *The Sydney Herald* (17 November, 1834), p. 2.

⁵⁰ 'Cannibals', *The Times* (11 May 1835), p. 4.

⁵¹ 'Native Outrage at Wangaroa', *The West Coast Times* (21 May, 1866), p. 2.

⁵² Angela Woollacott, *Gender and Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 42.

⁵³ Woollacott, *Gender and Empire*, p. 42.

⁵⁴ In Britain, middle class respectability, Davidoff and Hall have shown, was constructed through a complex set of social values, among which the family was probably the most central to social organisation, as well as through gendered power relations. These were, they argued, ideological constructions, which had concrete and immediate effects on social, political and economical life. Moreover, they claim that women were themselves crucially important in imagining certain prescribed patterns of family life. Eleonore Davidoff, Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle-Class 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 1987).

⁵⁵ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*; p. 454; and Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), p. 96.

⁵⁶ Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class*, p. 75.

⁵⁷ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 33.

⁵⁸ See Woollacott, *Gender and Empire*, p. 43.

⁵⁹ Woollacott, *Gender and Empire*, pp. 52-3. On the notion of respectability also see Kirsten McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney & Cape Town, 1820 - 1850* (Melbourne: Melbourne Univ. Press, 2004), pp. 11-12, 180-81.

⁶⁰ See Charlotte Macdonald, 'Too Many Men and Too Few Women: Gender's "Fatal Impact" in Nineteenth Century Colonies', in Caroline Daley and Deborah Montgomerie (eds), *The Gendered Kiwi* (Auckland: Auckland Univ. Press, 1999), pp. 17-35, and A. James Hammerton, 'Gender and Migration', in Levine, *Gender and Empire*, pp. 156-80.

⁶¹ Levine, 'Introduction', p. 8.

⁶² Hammerton, 'Gender and Migration', p. 169.

⁶³ Raewyn Dalziel, 'The Colonial Helpmeet: Women's Role and the Vote in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History* 11, 2 (1977), p. 112.

⁶⁴ 'Native Affairs', *The Daily Southern Cross* (16 May, 1863), p. 3.

⁶⁵ See Trevor Bentley, *Pakeha Maori: The Extraordinary Story of the Europeans who Lived as Maori in Early New Zealand* (Auckland: Penguin, 1999).

⁶⁶ John Anthony Knocks, *Reminiscences of Early Wellington and Mana Island, 1832-1840*, Alexander Turnbull Library, qMS-1117. See also Craik, *The New Zealanders*, pp. 279-81.

⁶⁷ Jules Verne, *Among the Cannibals* (London: War, Lock, & Co, 1877), p. 82.

⁶⁸ William Barrett Marshall, *A Personal Narrative of Two Visits to New Zealand in His Majesty's Ship Alligator, A.D. 1834* (London: James Nisbet, 1836), p. 188.

⁶⁹ Henry Gunton, *Diary of an expedition to New Zealand, 30 August 1834 - 30 November 1834*, Alexander Turnbull Library, MS-Papers-0960; and Edward Markham, *New Zealand, or Recollections of it* (Wellington: R.E. Owen, 1963), p. 128.

⁷⁰ Markham, *New Zealand, or Recollections of it*, p. 128.

⁷¹ See Angela Wanhalla, 'Interracial Sexual Violence in nineteenth-century New Zealand: Reconsidering the NZ Wars', unpublished paper (Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand Historical Association Conference, 27 November, 2009), pp. 6-7. Of all publicly reported cases of women's captivity during the 1860s around one third involved mixed-descent women or girls, or Maori women legally married to male European settlers.

⁷² 'Native Affairs', *The Daily Southern Cross* (16 May 1863), p. 3.

⁷³ 'Mr. Perrott's lost child', *Taranaki Herald* (31 January 1874), p. 2.

⁷⁴ This interview has been reprinted in Caroline Perrett, 'My Life Among the Maoris', *Historical Review: Bay of Plenty Journal of History* 14, 1 (1966), pp. 28-37.

⁷⁵ Perrett, 'My Life Among the Maoris', p. 35.

⁷⁶ Namias, *White Captives*, pp. 10-11.

⁷⁷ Marshall, *A Personal Narrative of Two Visits to New Zealand in His Majesty's Ship Alligator, A.D. 1834*, pp. 184-5.

⁷⁸ Maria Bennett, *A Narrative of the Suffering of Maria Bennett*.

⁷⁹ 'New Zealand', *The Sydney Herald* (17 November 1834), p. 2. According to Bentley, this was a common ritual. See Bentley, *Captured by Maori*, pp. 129-30.

⁸⁰ See S. Percy Smith, 'History and the Traditions of the Taranaki Coast', *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 19, 3 (1910), p. 108.

⁸¹ See Polack, *Manners and Customs of the New Zealanders*, p. 153.

⁸² Maria Bennett, *A Narrative of the Suffering of Maria Bennett*. See also 'The Waikato Natives', *The Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle* (13 May 1863), p. 3.

⁸³ Bronwyn Dalley, 'Criminal Conversations: Infanticide, Gender and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', in Caroline Daley and Deborah Montgomerie (eds), *The Gendered Kiwi* (Auckland: Auckland Univ. Press, 1999), p. 63.

⁸⁴ 'New Zealand', *The Sydney Herald* (17 November 1834), p. 2.

⁸⁵ According to the departure list of *The Sydney Herald* the Guard family left Sydney for New Zealand in February 1836 together with three children. Given the fact that their daughter Louisa died shortly after their return to Sydney, Betty must have become mother of twins. See 'Shipping Intelligence', *The Sydney Herald* (22 February 1836), p. 2.

⁸⁶ Markham, *New Zealand, or Recollections of it*, p. 78.

⁸⁷ Markham, *New Zealand, or Recollections of it*, p. 78.

⁸⁸ John Shaw, *A Gallop to the Antipodes, Returning Overland through India* (London: J.F. Hope, 1858), pp. 147-8.