

Captured by Maori: White Female Captives, Sex and Racism on the Nineteenth-Century New Zealand Frontier. By Trevor Bentley. Penguin Books, Auckland, 2004. 282 pp. NZ price: \$35.00. ISBN 0-143019-23-6.

CAPTURED BY MAORI is Trevor Bentley's second foray into writing the history of physical contact between white newcomers and Maori society before, or separate from, formal colonization. His first book, *Pakeha Maori*, told the story of various white males who lived among and often married Maori at a time when Maori still dominated New Zealand, politically and culturally. With his second book, Bentley attempts to find a position for captive white women in early-contact New Zealand. He recreates (mostly through 'informed speculation' alone) the stories of nine white women and two 'mixed-race' women; all women 'captured' by Maori. But with one exception, these women were illiterate and their stories have therefore been either lost in the official record, or 'captured' by the white men who physically rescued them from captivity or encountered them while captured. Bentley attempts to set these women free in the historical record by restoring to them a sense of personal agency and choice. He poses the question: is it possible these women even enjoyed their time of captivity?

Bentley is clearly of the view that they did; that, paradoxically, once the initial terror of capture was over their entrapment was a time of freedom from the drudgery of nineteenth-century white womanhood. But while Bentley is right to question the role that white women had in early New Zealand, he needs more concrete material — and a more representative sample — than is evident in this work to support his often quite remarkable claims about these women and how typical their stories are of male/female and Maori/Pakeha contact on the frontier.

Take his first example, that of Charlotte Badger, escaped convict and sometime pirate. She is without doubt a fascinating character of frontier history. But having read Bentley's description of her, the reader is left none the wiser as to who Charlotte really was, and what her views were of either convict or Maori society — or what their views were of her. The only firm fact we know is that Charlotte was found in the Tongan islands in 1818 by an American whaling ship. She had evidently been residing in Tonga for some time, for with her was her young 'half-caste' Tongan child. She informed the whaling crew that she had escaped from the New Zealand Maori.

A convicted prostitute and thief, Badger had been sentenced to nine years' transportation and was in Port Jackson in 1806. She then escaped by apparently leading a mutiny while en route to Tasmania. Clearly not commanding the loyalty of her fellow mutineers for long, she was dumped with several others at the Bay of Islands, effectively abandoned to a very uncertain future. In 1808 a ship's captain reported her to be still resident at the Bay of Islands, living with a 'rangatira'. Bentley could find little trace of her for the next ten years, until the encounter in Tonga. However, he confidently states that, though he does not know who Charlotte's 'rangatira' was, he would have been a man of mana, deriving from his 'inherited rank and personal achievement'. Bentley continues that he 'would have been an athletic figure, approximately six feet tall, with full face and thigh tattoos' (p.36). Moreover, Charlotte quickly moves, again on the basis of 'informed speculation', from a captured slave to a 'woman of mana'. While we know nothing of her for ten years, Bentley has no doubt that she would have, perhaps for the first time in her life, experienced 'real acceptance, nurturing and love' (p.36). Bentley positively asserts that her (possibly) ten-year residence among Maori is proof she chose to stay with them: 'Charlotte Badger preferred to live as a captive among Maori' (p.37). The thing is, by the only facts Bentley presents, she escaped when she got the chance. And surely it can be no small wonder that, as an escaped convict and mutineer, it was not back to Sydney that she fled. It is inconsistencies like these, and contradictions of his own statements even within paragraphs, that make many of Bentley's confident assertions more than a little difficult to accept, let alone use as the basis for building more assertions on. They

inevitably make the reader wonder whether he is resurrecting these women to free them, or to continue their role as exotic captives.

The question of Bentley's motives raises itself early in the book. Take for example his description of Badger: 'With her fair hair and white skin she must have ranked among the most famous of the exotic curiosities' (p.33). But, though he is cautious about romanticizing Badger's life amongst Maori, within the very same paragraph Bentley, on an unknown basis, describes Badger as possessing 'loose hair, tanned skin, bare feet, [and] Maori adornments' (p.37). On the same page, Maori rangatira 'preferred monogamy', so Charlotte 'may' have lived in a superior carved house and enjoyed a better position than commoner Maori. But just three pages earlier, Bentley claims rangatira in general were polygamous, commonly with a number of captive slave wives possessing no status (and presumably no adornments) (p.34).

In the conclusion to the book, Bentley argues, again presumably on the basis of 'informed speculation', that it is possible 'the quality of the cross-cultural relationships between the white women and their male protector husbands was far better than what the women had previously experienced with their European husbands' (pp.240–1). With statements like this, the reader cannot avoid reaching the conclusion that Bentley is straying from the realms of historical research and analysis and into the world of romantic fiction. This world in fact reinforces the role of these women as captured exotics (whether in reality or in the narratives) rather than as having their own agency and making their own choices. And it tells us nothing of Maori society's view of them, or how they illuminate life on the frontier.

This book represents a lost opportunity. While Bentley clearly views the captured women as some kind of super heroines, he has not used what we do know of these rare captive experiences to reflect on the other, far more common side of early interaction between Maori and Pakeha. The fact is that the vast majority of examples of early contact were remarkable for the degree of positive, chosen interaction between the two groups, rather than for the very few, and still factually hazy, cases of white female captivity.

KATE RIDDELL

Waitangi Tribunal

Steadfast in Hope: The Story of the Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington, 1850–2000. By Michael O'Meeghan SM. Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 2003. 371 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-86469-449-0.

THE CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON includes the lower part of the North Island and the top of the South Island. It was formed in 1848 out of Bishop Jean-Baptiste Pompallier's vast domain. Its first bishop, Philippe Viard, arrived to take up his see in 1850. The diocese was reduced in 1869, when the diocese of Dunedin was formed, reduced again in 1887 with the establishment of the Christchurch diocese (while Wellington became an archdiocese), and yet again in 1980 with the creation of the diocese of Palmerston North. Michael O'Meeghan, a Marist priest and author of a history of the diocese of Christchurch, has written an impressive account of the Wellington archdiocese, including districts it incorporated until the time of their excision.

While the Forward by Cardinal Thomas Williams emphasizes Vatican II's description of the Church as a pilgrim people, this is an institutional history rather than the story of the people. Chapter 21 on the Maori Mission ('The Cinderella Mission') humbly declares that it would be 'presumptuous for a New Zealand writer of European background to assess what impact the Maori missionaries have had on the Maori' (p.289). The approach in this chapter, however, is essentially the same as in other chapters, where the history